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THE
D I E G E S I S ;
BEING
A DISCOVERY

OF THE
ORIGIN, EVIDENCES, AND EARLY HISTORY
OF
CHRISTIANITY,

NEVER YET BEFORE OR ELSEWHERE SO FULLY AND FAITHFULLY
SET FORTH.

BY THE REV. ROBERT TAYLOR, A.B. & M.R.C.S.

Φιλοσοφία δὲ τὴν μὲν κατὰ φύσιν, ὡς βασιλεὺς, ἐπαινεῖ καὶ ἀσπαζομένη, τὴν δὲ
διεκλύττειν φασκουσάν παραίτου.—*Euphrates Philosoph. ad Vespasian. Imp.*
quoad Apollonii Tyanæ Miracula: citante Lardnero. Vol. IV. p. 261.

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BOSTON :
PUBLISHED BY ABNER KNEELAND,
No. 14 Devonshire Street.
1834.

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DEDICATION.

TO THE
MASTER, FELLOWS, AND TUTORS OF
ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

REVEREND AND LEARNED SIRS,

IN interesting remembrance of the high sense your learned body were pleased to express of my successful studies, when I received your general vote of thanks, delivered to me by the Master himself, the late Dr. Craven, for the honour you were pleased to consider that my poor talents and application, *in statu pupillari*, had conferred on our College, which holds such distinguished rank in the most distinguished University in the world ; I very respectfully dedicate the *DIEGESIS*, the employment of my many solitary hours in an unjust imprisonment, incurred in the most glorious cause that ever called virtue to act, or fortitude to suffer. You will appreciate (far beyond any wish of mine that you should *seem* to appreciate) the merits of this work. Your assistance for the perfecting of future editions, by animadversion on any errors which might have crept into

the first ; and the feeling with respect to it, which I cannot but anticipate, though it may never be expressed ; will amply gratify an ambition whose undivided aim was to set forth truth, and nothing else but truth.

ROBERT TAYLOR, A. B.
PRISONER.

Oakham Gaol, Feb. 19, 1829.

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PROLEGOMENA.

ON all hands 'tis admitted that the Christian religion is matter of most serious importance : it is so, if it be truth, because in that truth a law of faith and conduct measuring out to us a propriety of sentiment and action, which would otherwise not be incumbent upon us, is propounded to our observance in this life ; and eternal consequences of happiness or of misery, are at issue upon our observance or neglect of that law.

To deny to the Christian religion such a degree of importance, is not only to launch the keenest sarcasm against its whole apparatus of supernatural phenomena, but is virtually to withdraw its claims and pretensions altogether. For if men, after having received a divine revelation, are brought to know no more than what they knew before, nor are obliged to do any thing which otherwise they would not have been equally obliged to do ; nor have any other consequences of their conduct to hope or fear, than otherwise would have been equally to be hoped or feared ; then doth the divine revelation reveal nothing, and all the pretence thereto, is driven into an admission of being a misuse of language. On the other hand, the Christian religion is of scarce less importance, if it be false ; because, no wise and good man could possibly be indifferent or unconcerned to the prevalence of an extensive and general delusion. No good and amiable heart could for a moment think of yielding its assent to so monstrous an idea, as the supposition that *error* could possibly be useful, that imposture could be beneficial, that the heart could be set right by setting the understanding wrong, that men were to be made rational by being deceived, and rendered just and virtuous by credulity and ignorance.

To be in error one's self, is a misfortune ; and if it be such an error as mightily affects our peace of mind, it is a very grievous misfortune ; to be the cause of error to others, either by deceiving them ourselves, or by connivance, and furtherance of the councils and machinations by which we see that they *are* deceived, is a crime ; it is a most cruel triumph over nature's weakness, a most

barbarous wrong done to our brother man ; it is the kind of wrong which we should most justly and keenly resent, could we be sensible of its being put upon ourselves.

A Nero playing upon his harp, in view of a city in flames, is a less frightful picture than that of the solitary philosopher basking in the serenity of his own speculations, but indifferent to the ignorance he could remove, the error he could correct, or the misery he could relieve.

As then there is no falsehood more apparently false, and more morally mischievous, than to suppose that error can be useful, and delusion conducive to happiness and virtue : so, there can be no place for the medium or alternative of indifference between the truth or falsehood of the Christian religion. Every argument that could show it to be a blessing to mankind, being true, must in like degree tend to demonstrate it to be a curse and a mischief, being false.

If it be true, there can be no doubt that God, its all wise and benevolent author, must have given to it such sufficient evidence and proofs of its truth, that every creature whom he hath endued with rational faculties, upon the honest and conscientious exercise of those faculties, must be able to arrive at a perfect and satisfactory conviction. To suppose that there either is, or by any possibility could be, a natural disinclination or repugnancy in man's mind, to receive the truths of revelation, is "to charge God foolishly ;" as if, when he had the making of man's mind, and the making of his revelation also, he had not known how to adapt the one to the other ; nor is it less than to open the door to every conceivable absurdity and imposture, and to give to the very grossness and palpability of falsehood, the *advantage* over evidence, truth, and reason. If we are to conceive that any thing may be the more likely to be true, in proportion to its appearing more palpably and demonstrably false, and that God can possibly have intended us to embrace *that*, which he has so constituted our minds, that they must naturally suspect and dislike it, why so, then, all principles and tests of truth and evidence are abolished at once ; we may as well take poison for our food, and rush on what our nature shudders at, for safety.

To suppose that belief or unbelief can either be a virtue or a crime, or any man morally better or worse for belief or unbelief, is to assume that man has a faculty which

we see and feel that he has *not*;* to wit,—a power of making himself believe, of being convinced when he is *not* convinced, and not convinced when he *is*: which is a being and not being at the same time, the sheer end of “all discourse of reason.”

To suppose that a suitable state of mind, and certain previous dispositions of meekness, humility, and teachableness are necessary to fit us for the reception of divine truth, as the soil must be prepared to receive the seed, is in like manner to argue preposterously, and to open the door to the reception of falsehood as well as of truth; as the prepared ground will fertilize the tares as prolifically as the wheat, and is indifferent to either.

And in proportion as the state of mind so supposed to be necessary, is supposed to be an easily yielding, readily consenting, and feebly resisting state; the more facile is it to the practices of imposture and cunning, and the less worthy conquest of evidence and reason. The property of truth is not, surely, to wait till men are in right frames of mind to receive it, but to find them wrong, and to set them right; to find them ignorant and to make them wise; not created by the mind, but itself the mind's creator; it is the sovereign that ascends the throne, and not the throne that makes the sovereign; where it reigns not, right dispositions cannot be found, and where it reigns, they cannot be wanting.

The highest honour we can pay to truth, is to show our confidence in it, and our desire to have it sifted and analyzed, by how rough a process soever; as being well assured that it is *that* alone that can abide all tests, and which, like the genuine gold, will come out all the purer from the fiercer fire.

While there are bad hearted men in the world, and those who wish to make falsehood pass for truth, they will ever discover themselves and their counsel, by their impatience of contradiction, their hatred of those who differ from them, their wish to suppress inquiry, and their bitter resentment, when what *they* call truth, has not been handled with the delicacy and niceness, which it was never any thing else but falsehood that required or needed.

All the mighty question now before us requires, is, attention and ability; without any presentiment, prejudica-

* This thought is Dr. Whithy's; who, after publishing his voluminous Commentary on the Scriptures, published this among his “Last Thoughts.”

tion, or prepossession whatever ; but with a perfect and equal willingness to come to such conclusion as the evidence of moral demonstration shall offer to our conviction, and to be guided only by such canons or rules of evidence as determine our convictions with respect to all other questions.



CHAPTER I.

DEFINITIONS.

By the Christian religion, is to be understood the whole system of theology found in the Bible, as consisting of the two volumes of the Old and New Testament ; and as that system now is, and generally has been understood, by the many, or general body of that large community of persons professing and calling themselves Christians.

That this system of theology might not be confounded with previously existing pretences to divine revelation, or held to be a mere enthusiasm or conceit of imagination, its best and ablest advocates challenge for it, historical *data*, and affect to trace it up to its origination in time, place, and circumstance, as all other historical facts may be traced.

Upon this ground, the doctrines become facts, and we are no longer called on to believe, but to investigate and examine. We are permitted, fearlessly to apply the rules of criticism and evidence, by which we measure the credibility of all other facts.

THE TIME assigned as that of the historical origination of Christianity, is, the three or four first centuries of the prevalence and notoriety of a system of theology under that name ; reckoning from the reign of the Roman Emperor Augustus, to its ultimate and complete establishment under Constantine the Great.

Any continuance of its history *after* this time, is unnecessary to the purpose of an investigation of its evidences ; as any proof of its existence *before* this time, would certainly be fatal to the origination challenged for it.

THE PLACE assigned as that of the historical origination of this religion, is, the obscure and remote province of Judea, which is about equal in extent of territory to the

principality of Wales, being one hundred and sixty miles in length, from Dan to Beersheba, and forty six miles in breadth, from Joppa to Bethlehem, between 35 and 36 degrees east longitude from Greenwich, and between 31 and 33 degrees north latitude, in nearest coasting upon the eastern extremity of the Mediterranean sea, and in the neighbourhood of Egypt, Arabia, Phœnicia, and Syria.*

THE CIRCUMSTANCES assigned as those of the historical basis of this religion, are, that in the reigns of the Roman Emperors Augustus and Tiberius, and in the province of Judea, a Jew, of the lower order of that lowest and most barbarous of all subjects of the Roman empire, arose into notoriety among his countrymen, from the circumstance of leaving his ordinary avocation as a labouring mechanic, and travelling on foot from village to village in that little province, affecting to cure diseases; that he preached the doctrines, or some such, as are ascribed to him in the New Testament; and that he gave himself out to be some extraordinary personage: but failing in his attempt to gain popularity, he was convicted as a malefactor, and publicly executed, under the presidency and authority of the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate. This extraordinary person was called JESUS or JOSHUA, a name of ordinary occurrence among the Jewish clan; and from the place of his nativity, or of his more general residence, he is designated as JESUS OF NAZARETH: the obscurity of his parentage, or his equivocal legitimacy having left him without any name or designation of his family or descent.†

These are circumstances which fall entirely within the scale of rational probability, and draw for no more than an ordinary and indifferent testimony of history, to command the mind's assent. The mere relation of any historian, living near enough to the time supposed, to guarantee the probability of his competent information on the subject, would have been entitled to our acquiescence. We could have had no reason to deny or to doubt, what such an historian could have had no motive to feign or to exag-

* "The geography of Palestine lies in a narrow compass. It comprises a tract of country of nearly 200 miles in length, in its full extent, from the river of Egypt south of Gaza to the furthest bounds towards Damascus, and perhaps of more than 100 in breadth, including Perea, from the Mediterranean eastward to the desert Arabia."—ELSLY.

† Being, *as was supposed*, the son of Joseph, Luke iv. 23. It was no matter of supposition that his mother had yielded to the embraces of מַלְאָכִי Gabriel; that is, literally, the *man* of God, Luke i. 38.

authentic, and valid eviſſence to the full extent to which it purports to extend ; or it is the forgery of a wonderfully adroit and well-practiſed ſophiſticator.

The extent of its purport will be matter of ſubſequent investigation. Our reſpect for it, in the preſent ſtage of our proceſs, ſtands in guarantee of our willingneſs and deſire to receive and admit whatever bears the character of that ſort of rational evidence, which is admitted on all other queſtions ; while we lay to the line and the plummet, that irremeable and everlaſting border of diſtinction that ſeparates the bright focus of truth and certainty, from the miſty indiſtinctneſs and conſuſion of fallacy and fable.

But further off, even to an infinite remoteneſs from any designation or reference to the perſon of the crucified Jeſus, are the complimentary and idolatrous epithets of honour or of worſhip, which the heathen nations, from the remotest antiquity, were in the habit of applying to their gods, demigods, and heroes, who from the various ſervices which they were believed to have rendered to mankind, were called *saviours* of the world, *redeemers* of mankind, phyſicians of ſouls, &c., and addreſſed by every one of the doxologies, even, *not excepting one* of thoſe which Chriſtian piety has ſince confined and appropriated to the Jewish Jeſus.

Nor are any of the ſupernatural, or extraordinary circumſtances, which either *with* truth or without it, are aſſerted or believed of the man of Nazareth, at all characteristic or diſtinctive of *that* perſon, from any of the innumerable hoſt of heaven-deſcended, virgin-born, wonder-working ſons of God, of whom the like ſupernatural and extraordinary circumſtances were aſſerted and believed, with as great faith, and with as little reaſon.

To have been the whole world's *deſideratum*, to have been foretold by a long ſeries of undoubted prophecies, to have been attested by a glorious diſplay of indisputable miracles, to have revealed the moſt myſtical doctrines, to have acted as never man acted, and to have ſuffered as never man ſuffered, were among the moſt ordinary credentials of the gods and goddeſſes with which Olympus groaned.

As our buſineſs in this treatiſe is, with ſtubborn fact and abſolute evidence, I ſhall ſubjoin ſo much of the Chriſtian creed as is abſolutely and unqueſtionably of Pagan origin, and which, though not found as put together in this precise formulary, is certainly to be deduced

from previously existing Pagan writings. *That* only, which could not, or would not, have expressed the fair sense of any form of Pagan faith, can be peculiarly Christian. That only which the Christian finds that he has to say, of which a worshipper of the gods could not have said the same or the like before him, is Christianity.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHRISTIAN AND PAGAN CREEDS COLLATED.

The Christian Creed.

1. I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

2. And in Jesus Christ his only son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

3. Born of the Virgin Mary.

4. Suffered under Pontius Pilate.

5. Was crucified.

6. Dead and buried.

7. He descended into hell.

8. The third day he rose again from the dead.

9. He ascended into heaven.

10. And sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

11. From whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

12. I believe in the Holy Ghost.

13. The Holy Catholic Church.

14. The Communion of Saints.

15. The forgiveness of sins.

The Pagan Creed.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jasius* Christ his only son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Born of the Virgin Electra.

Suffered under (*whom it might be.*)

Was struck by a thunderbolt.

Dead and buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven.

And sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Catholic Divinity.

The Communion of Saints.

The forgiveness of sins.

* "Jasiusque Pater, genus a quo principe nostrum." And father Jasius, from which Prince our race is descended.—VIRGIL.

16. The resurrection of the body.

17. And the life everlasting.

The immortality of the soul.

And the life everlasting.

This creed, though not to be found in this form in the Christian Scriptures, is evidently deducible from them as their sense and purport.

"This creed still bears the name of the *Apostle's Creed*. From the fourth century downwards it was almost generally considered as a production of the Apostles. All, however, who have the least knowledge of antiquity, look upon this opinion as entirely false and destitute of all foundation. There is much more reason in the opinion of those who think that this creed was not all composed at once, but from small beginnings was imperceptibly augmented, in proportion to the growth of heresy, and according to the exigencies and circumstances of the church, from which it was designed to banish the errors that daily arose."—Mosheim, vol. i. p. 116, 117.

This creed, though not to be found in this form in the Pagan Scriptures, is evidently deducible from them as their sense and purport.

The reader is to throw into this scale, an equal quantity of allowance and apology to that claimed by the advocate of Christianity for the opposite. He will only observe that on this side, apology and palliation for a known and acknowledged imposture and forgery for so many ages palmed upon the world, is not needed.

It is not the Pagan creed that was imposed upon mankind, under a false superscription, and ascribed to an authority from which it was known not to have proceeded. Whether a church, which stands convicted of having forged its creed, would have made any scruple of forging its gospels; is a problem that the reader will solve according to the influence of prejudice or probability on his mind.

INFERENCE.

As then, the *so called* Apostle's Creed, is admitted to have been written by no such persons as the Apostles, and with respect to the high authority which has for so many ages been claimed for it, is a convicted imposture and forgery; the equity of rational evidence will allow weight enough, even to a probable conjecture, to overthrow all that remains of its pretensions. The probability is, that it is really a Pagan document, and of Pagan origination; since, even after the trifling alteration and substitution of one name perhaps for another, to make it subserve its new application, it yet exhibits a closer resem-

blance to its Pagan stock, than to the Christian stem on which it has been engrafted.

By a remarkable oversight of the *keepings* and congruities of the system, the Christian creed has omitted to call for our belief of the miracles or prophecies which constitute its evidence, or for our practice of the duties which should be the test of its utility.

If then, as the learned and judicious Jeremiah Jones, in his excellent treatise on the canonical authority of the New Testament, most justly observes, "In order to establish the canon of the New Testament, it be of absolute necessity that the pretences of all other books to canonical authority be first examined and refuted:"* much more must it be absolutely necessary to establish the paramount and distinctive challenges of Christianity, that we should be able to refute and overthrow all the pretences of previously existing religions, by such a cogency and fairness of argument, as in being fatal to them, shall admit of no application to this, which battering down their air-built castles, shall, when brought to play with equal force on Christianity, leave its defences unshaken and its beauty unimpaired.



CHAPTER III.

STATE OF THE HEATHEN WORLD.

It is manifestly unworthy of any cause, in itself containing an intrinsic and independent excellence, that its advocates should condescend to set it off by a foil, or to act as if they thought it necessary to decry and disparage the pretensions of others, in order to magnify and exalt their own. It is certain that the vileness of falsehood can add nothing to the glory of truth. Showing the various systems of heathen idolatry to be, how vile soever, would be adducing neither evidence nor even presumption for the proof of the divinity of a system of religion that was not so vile, or even if you please, say infinitely superior; as a beautiful woman would certainly feel it to be but an ill compliment to her beauty, to have it constantly obtruded upon her observance, how hideously deformed and monstrously ugly were those, than whom she was so much more beautiful.

* Vol. I. p. 16. 8vo. Ed.

As it would not be fair to take up our notion of the Christian religion, from the lowest and most ignorant of its professors, and still less, perhaps, to estimate its merits, by the representations which its known and avowed enemies would be likely to give ; the balance of equal justice on the other side, will forbid our forming our estimate of the ancient paganism from the misconceptions of its unworthy votaries, or the interested detractions and exaggerations of its Christian opponents.

The only just and honourable estimate will be that which shall judge of paganism, as Christians would wish their own religion to be judged—by its own absolute documents, by the representations of its advocates, and the admissions of its adversaries.

When it is borne in mind, that a supernatural origination or divine authority is not claimed for these systems of theology, there can be no occasion to fear their rivalry or encroachment on systems founded on such a claim ; and still less, to decry, vituperate, and scandalize these, as any means of exalting or magnifying those. There cannot be the least doubt, that in dark and barbarous ages, the rude and unlettered part of mankind would grossly pervert the mystical or allegorical sense, if such there were, in the forms of religion propounded to their observance or imposed on their simplicity ; while it is impossible, that those enlightened and philosophical characters, who have left us in their writings the most undoubted evidence of the greatest shrewdness of intellect, extent of inquiry, and goodness of heart, should have understood their mythology in no better or higher significance than as it was understood by the ignorant of their own persuasion, or would be represented by their enemies, who had the strongest possible interest in defaming and decrying it. When the worst is done in this way, Christianity would be but little the gainer by being weighed in the same scales. Should we be allowed to fix on the darkest day of her eleven hundred years of dark ages, and to pit the grossest notions of the grossest ignorance of that day, as specimens of Christianity ; against the views which Christians have been generally pleased to give as representations of paganism ; how would they abide the challenge, “ look on this picture and on this ? ” Those doctrines only, of which no form or forms of the previously existing paganism could ever pretend the same or the like doctrines, can be properly and distinctively

called *Christian*. *That* degree of excellence, whose very lowest stage is raised above the very highest acme of what is known and admitted to have been no more than human, can alone put in a challenge to be regarded as divine. *That* which was not known before, is that only which a subsequent revelation can have taught.

To justify the claims, therefore, of such a subsequent revelation, we must make the full allowance, and entirely strike out of the equation, all quantities estimated to their fullest and utmost appreciation, which are, and have been claimed as the property of pre-existent systems; and as they were *not* divine, while it is pretended that this is, the discovery of a resemblance between the one and the other, can only be feared by those who are conscious that they are making a false pretence. Resemblance to a counterfeit is, in this assay, proof of a counterfeit. Brass may sometimes be brought to look like gold, but the pure gold had never yet the ring and imperfections of any baser metal.

At the time alleged as that of the birth of Jesus, all nations were living in the peaceful profession and practice of the several systems of religious faith which they had, as nations or as families, derived from their ancestors, in an antiquity lying far beyond the records of historical commemoration. Christians generally claim for this epocha of time the truly honourable distinction of being the *pacific age*.* The benign influence of letters and philosophy, was at this time extensively diffused through countries which had previously lain under the darkest ignorance; and nations, whose manners had been savage and barbarous, were civilized by the laws and commerce of the Romans. The Christian writer *Orosius*, maintains that the temple of Janus was then shut, and that wars and discords had absolutely ceased throughout the world: which, though an allegorical, and very probably an hyperbolical representation of the matter, is at least an honourable testimony to the then state of the heathen world.

The notion of one supreme being was universal. No calumny could be more egregious, than that which charges the pagan world with ever having lost sight of that notion, or compromised or surrendered its paramount importance, in all the varieties and modifications of pagan

* Mosheim, Vol. I. Chap. 1.

piety.* This predominant notion, (admits Mosheim) showed itself, even through the darkness of the grossest idolatry.

The candour which gives the Protestant Christian credit for his professed belief in the unity of God, even against the conflict of his own assertion of believing at the same time in a trinity of three persons, which are each of them a God; the fairness which respects the distinction which the Catholic Christian challenges between his Latria and Doulia, his worship of the Almighty, and his veneration of the images of the saints, will never suppose that the divinity of the inferior deities was understood in any sense of disparagement to the alone supreme and undivided godhead of their "one first—one greatest—only Lord of all."

The evidences of Christianity must be in a labouring condition indeed, if they require us to imagine that a Cicero, Tacitus, or Pliny were worshippers of gods of wood and stone; or to force on our apprehensions such a violence, as that we should imagine that the mighty mind that had enriched the world with Euclid's Elements of Geometry, could have bowed to the deities of Euclid's Egypt, and worshipped leeks and crocodiles.

Orthodoxy itself will no longer suggest its resistance to the only faithful and rational account of the matter, so elegantly given us by Gibbon.† "The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world, were all considered, by the people, as equally true,—by the philosopher, as equally false,—and by the magistrate, as equally useful.

"Both the interests of the priests, and the credulity of the people were sufficiently respected. In their writings and conversation, the philosophers of antiquity asserted the independent dignity of reason; but they resigned their actions to the commands of law and custom. Viewing with a smile of pity and indulgence the various errors of the vulgar, they diligently practised the ceremonies of their fathers, devoutly frequented the temples of the gods; and sometimes condescending to act a part on the theatre of superstition, they concealed the sentiments of

* All the inferior deities in Homer, are represented as thus addressing the supreme Jove:

"Oh first and greatest, GOD! by gods adored,
We own thy power, our father and our lord."—*Iliad*.

† Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. i. chap. 2. p. 46.

an atheist under the sacerdotal robe. Reasoners of such a temper were scarcely inclined to wrangle about their respective modes of faith, or of worship. It was indifferent to them what shape the folly of the multitude might choose to assume; and they approached with the same inward contempt and the same external reverence to the altars of the Lybian, the Olympian, or the Capitoline Jupiter.”*

It was a common adage among the Greeks, *θαυματα μωροῖς*—*Miracles for fools*; and the same proverb obtained among the shrewder Romans, in the saying, *Vulgus vult decipi—decipiatur*, “*The common people like to be deceived—deceived let them be.*”

The Christian, perhaps, may boast of his sincerity, but a moment’s thought will admonish him how little virtue there is in such a quality, when it forces a necessity of hypocrisy on others. Sincerity should be safe on both sides of the hedge. It was never taken for a virtue in an unbeliever.

“Every nation then had its respective gods, over which presided one more excellent than the rest;” and the degree of this pre-eminency, as versified by Pope from the 6th book of the Iliad, is an absolute vindication of the Pagan world from the charge of the grosser and more revolting sense of Polytheism. They were virtually DEISTS. None of their divinities were thought to approach nearer to the supremacy of the father of gods and men, than the various orders of the Cherubim and Seraphim, to the God and Father of Jesus Christ,

“——— Who but behold his utmost skirts of glory,
And far off, his steps adore.”

So in the language of their Iliad (and language has nothing more sublime) we read the august challenge:—

“Let down our golden everlasting chain,
Whose strong embrace holds heaven, and earth, and main;
Strive all of mortal or immortal birth,
To drag by this the thunderer down to earth.
Ye strive in vain. If I but lift this hand,
I heave the heavens, the ocean, and the land;
For such I reign unbounded and above,
And such are men, and gods, compared to Jove.”

Mosheim, upon an evident misunderstanding, assumes that their supreme deity, in comparison to whom the

* Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. i. p. 49, 50.

gods and goddesses were as far off from an absolute divinity, as ever were the guardian angels and tutelary saints of Christianity ; was himself believed to be subject to the rigid empire of the *fates*, or what the philosophers called *eternal necessity*. But the word *fate*, by its derivation from the natural indication of command—FIAT ! *Be it so* ; may satisfy us, that nothing more was meant, than that the supreme deity was bound by his own engagements, that his word was irrevocable, and that all his actions were determined and guided by the everlasting law of righteousness, and conformed to the counsels and sanctions of his own unerring mind. So that He, and He alone, could say with truth,

“ ————— Necessity and Chance
Approach me not, and what I will—is FATE.”

“ One thing, indeed,” says our authority, (Mosheim), “ appears at first sight very remarkable—that the variety of religions and gods in the heathen world, neither produced wars nor dissensions among the different nations.”* A diligent and candid investigation of historical data will demonstrate, that from this general rule, there is no valid and satisfactory instance of exception. The Greeks may have carried on a war to recover lands that had been distrained from the possession of their priests ; and the Egyptians may have revenged the slaughter of their crocodiles ; but these wars never proposed as their object, the insolent intolerance of forcing *their* modes of faith or worship on other nations. They were not offended at their neighbours for serving other divinities, but they could not bear that theirs, should be put to death. And if, perhaps, where we read the word *divinities*, we should understand it to mean nothing more than *favourites* ; and instead of saying that people *worshipped* such and such things, that they were excessively or foolishly attached to them ; considering that such language owes its original modification to Christian antipathies, it might be brought back to a nearer affinity to probability, as well as to charity. An Egyptian might be as fond of onions, as a Welshman of leeks, a Scot of thistles, or an Irishman of shamrock, without exactly taking their garbage for omnipotence.†

* Their religion had not made fools of them.

† Who that wished to be a thriving wooer, ever hesitated to drop on his knee and *adore* his mistress ? “ With my body I thee worship.”—*Matrimonial Service*.

“Each nation suffered its neighbours to follow their own method of worship, to adore their own gods, to enjoy their own rites and ceremonies, and discovered no displeasure at their diversity of sentiments in religious matters. They all looked upon the world as one great empire, divided into various provinces, over every one of which, a certain order of divinities presided, and that, therefore, none could behold with contempt the gods of other nations, or force strangers to pay homage to theirs.

The Romans exercised this toleration in the amplest manner. As the sources from which all men’s ideas are derived, are the same, namely, from their senses, there being no other inlet to the mind but thereby, there is nothing wonderful in the general prevalence of a sameness of the ideas of human beings in all regions and all ages of the world. The affections of fear, grief, pain, hope, pleasure, gratitude, &c., are as common to man as his nature as a man, and could not fail to produce a corresponding similarity in the objects of his superstitious veneration. To have nothing in common with the already established notions of mankind, to bear no features of resemblance to their hallucinations and follies, to be nothing like them, to be to nothing so unlike, should be the essential predications and necessary credentials of the “wisdom which is from above.”

It has, however, been alleged by learned men, with convincing arguments of probability, “that the principal deities of all the Gentile nations resembled each other extremely, in their essential characters; and if so, their receiving the same names could not introduce much confusion into mythology, since they were probably derived from one common source. If the *Thor* of the ancient Celts, was the same in dignity, character, and attributes with the *Jupiter* of the Greeks and Romans, where was the impropriety of giving him the same name? *Dies Jovis* is still the Latin form for our Thor’s day. When the Greeks found in other countries deities that resembled their own, they persuaded the worshippers of those foreign gods that their deities were the same that were honoured in Greece, and were, indeed, themselves convinced that this was the case. In consequence of this, the Greeks gave the names of their gods to those of other nations, and the Romans in this followed their example. Hence we find the names of Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, &c., frequently mentioned in the more recent

monuments and inscriptions which have been found among the Gauls and Germans, though the ancient inhabitants of those countries had worshipped no gods under such denominations."—*Note in Mosheim.*

To have been goddess-born, heaven-descended; to have "lived and died as none could live and die," to have been believed to have done and suffered great things for the service of mankind, but above all, to have propitiated the wrath of the Superior Deity, and to have conquered the invisible authors of mischief, in their behalf, was such an overwhelming draft on the tender feelings, the excitement of which is one of the strongest sources of pleasure in our nature, that the best hearts and the weakest heads never gave place to the coolness and apathy of scepticism. Not a doubt was entertained that a similar series of adventures was proof of one and the same hero, and that the Grecian Apollo, the Phœnician Adonis, the Æsculapius of Athens, the Osiris of Egypt, the Christ of India, were but various names of the self-same deity; so that nothing was so easy at any time, as the business of conversion. Not incredulity, but credulity, is the characteristic propensity of mankind.

A disposition to adopt the religious ceremonies of other nations, to multiply the objects of faith, to listen with eagerness to any thing that was offered to them under a profession of novelty, to believe every pretence to divine revelation, and to embrace every creed, presents itself in the history of almost every society of men, and is found as inalienable a characteristic of uncivilized, or but partially civilized man, as cunning is of the fox, and courage of the lion. Unbelief is no sin that ignorance was ever capable of being guilty of; to suspect it of the Gentile nations previous to the Christian era, is to outrage all inferences of our own experience, and to suppose the human race in former times to have been a different species of animals from any of which the wonder-loving and credulous vulgar of our own days could be the descendants.

Of all miracles that could possibly be imagined, the miracle of a miracle not being believed, would be the most miraculous, the most incongruous in its character, and the nearest to the involving a contradiction in its terms. If proof of a truth so obvious were not superfluous, the Christian might be commended to the consideration of authorities, to whose decision he is trained and disposed to submit.

His Paul of Tarsus finds, in the city of Athens, an altar erected to the *Unknown Gods*;* and taking what Le Clerc considers a justifiable liberty with the inscription, compliments the citizens on such a proof of their predisposition to receive the God whom he propounded to them, or any other, as well without evidence as with it, and to be converted without putting him to the trouble of a miracle. Acts xvii. 22.

The inhabitants of Lystra, upon only hearing of the most equivocal and suspicious case of wonderment that could well be imagined, even that a lame beggar, who might have been hired for the purpose, or probably had never been lame at all, had been cured, or imagined himself cured, by two entire strangers, itinerant Therapeutæ, or tramping quack-doctors, without either inquiry or doubt, set up the cry, "That Jupiter and Mercury were come down from heaven in the shape of these quack-doctors;" and with all the doctors themselves could do to check the intensity of their devotion, "*scarce restrained they the people that they had not done sacrifice.*"—Acts xiv. 18.

* "Quamvis plurali numero legeretur inscriptio *αγνωστοις θεοις* recte de Deo Ignoto, locutus est Paulus. Quia plurali numero continetur singularis."—Cleric. H. G. A. 52. p. 374. There is sufficient evidence, however, that Paul read the inscription correctly; so that the commentator's ready quibble is not called for.

The various translations given of this text, make a good specimen of the difficulty of coming at the real sense of any ancient legends.

THE GREEK.

Σταθεὶς δὲ ὁ Παῦλος ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ ἀρείου-
πάγου ἐφη ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι κατὰ πάντα
ἐξ εἰσδαιμονιστικῆς ὑμᾶς θεωρῶ.

THE LATIN.

Stans autem Paulus in medio Areo-
pagi, ait, Viri Athenensis, per omnia
quasi superstitiones vos aspicio.

1. DR. LARDNER'S TRANSLATION.

"Paul, therefore, standing up in the midst of the Areopagus, said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that ye are in all things very religious."

2. UNITARIAN VERSION.

"Then Paul stood in the midst of the court of Areopagus, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that ye are exceedingly addicted to the worship of demons."

3. ARCHBISHOP NEWCOMB'S VERSION.

"Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are somewhat too religious."

4. COMMON VERSION.

"Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious."

These various translators, however, did not mean exactly to discover, that religion and superstition were convertible terms.—Six, is one thing, and half a dozen is another.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STATE OF THE JEWS.

THE grand exception to the harmonious universalism of religions, and to that entire prevalence, as far as religion was concerned, of "peace on earth and good will among men," which arose from the practical conviction of a sentiment which had passed into a common proverb, "*DEORUM INJURIE, DIIS CURÆ*," that "*The wrongs of the gods were the concerns of the gods*," occurred among a melancholy and misanthropic horde of exclusively superstitious barbarians, who, from their own and the best account that we have of them, were colonized from their captivity, by a Babylonian prince, on the sterile soil of Judea, about twenty-three hundred years ago; and, by the exclusive, unsocial, and uncivilized character of their superstition, were exposed to frequent wars and final dispersion. The exclusive character of their superstition, and the constant intermarriage with their own caste or sect, have, to this day, preserved to them, in all countries, a distinct character. These barbarians, who resented the consciousness of their inferiority in the scale of rational being, by an invincible hatred of the whole human race, being without wit or invention to devise to themselves any original system of theology, adopted from time to time the various conceits of the various nations, by whom their rambling and predatory tribes had been held in subjugation. They plagiarized the religious legends of the nations, among whom their characteristic idleness and inferiority of understanding had caused them to be vagabonds; and pretended that the furtive patchwork was a system of theology intended by heaven for their exclusive benefit. There is, however, nothing extraordinary in this; the miserable and the wretched always seek to console themselves for the absence of real advantages, by an imaginary counterbalance of spiritual privilege. An' let *them* be the caterers, they shall always be the favourites of Omnipotence, and their afflictions in this world, shall be to be overpaid with a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," in another. In some instances it will be found, that the means of detecting the original idea has been washed down the

stream of time. The Jews, who, probably, always were, as they are at present, the *old-clothes-men* of the world, have had but little difficulty in scratching up a sufficient freshness of nap upon borrowed or stolen theology, to disguise its original character. Very often, however, has their idleness betrayed their policy, and left us scarcely so much as an alteration of names to put us to the trouble of a doubt.

They give us the story of the sacrifice of Ipthegeia, the daughter of Agamemnon, as an original legend of a judge of Israel, who had immolated his daughter to Yahouh, or Jao, without so much as respecting the wish to be deceived, not even being at the pains to vary the name of the heroine of the fable. By a division of the syllables into two words, *Ipthi-gei* is literally Jephtha's daughter; and even the name of Moses himself, as it stands in the Greek text, is composed of the same consonant letters as Mises, the Arabian name of Bacchus, of whom precisely the same adventures were related, and believed, many ages before there existed a race known on earth as the nation of Israel, or any individual of that nation capable of committing either truth or falsehood to written documents. There have been dancing bears, sagacious pigs, and learned horses in the world, but the Jews are as innocent as any of them of the faculty of original invention.

Their strong man (Samson) carrying away the gates of Gaza, is scarcely a various reading from the story of Hercules' pillars at Gades, Cades, or Cadiz.

That this melancholy race of rambling savages had derived the principal features of their theology from the deities of Egypt, is demonstrable from the literal identity of the name of the god of Memphis, Jao, with that of the boasted god of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, who are each of them believed to have been either natives or very long residents of that country.

Moses himself, on the face of their own report, was confessedly an Egyptian priest. The Jewish *Elohim* were the decans of the Egyptians; the same as the genii of the months and planets among the Persians and Chaldeans; and Jao, or Yahouh, considered merely as one of these beings generically called Elohim or Alehim, appears to have been only a national or topical deity. We find one of the presidents of the Jewish horde, negotiating with a king of the Amorites, precisely on

these terms of a common understanding between them. "Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh, thy Alehim, giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever Jao, our Alehim, shall drive out from before us, them will we possess."*

Nor is it at all concealed, that the power of Jao, as much as of any other topical god, was confined to the province over which he presided. "The Jao Alehim of Israel, fought for Israel,† and Jao drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but *could not* drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron."‡ The God of Israel was no match for the tutelary deities of the valley. The first commandment of the decalogue involves a virtual recognition of the existence, and rival, if not equal claims of other deities. "*Thou shalt have none other gods but me,*" is no mandate that *could* have issued from one who had been entirely satisfied of his own supremacy, and that those to whom he had once revealed himself, were in no danger of giving a preference to the idols of the Gentiles. To say nothing of the highest implied compliment to those idols, in the confession of Jao, that he was *jealous* of his people's attachment. "*I the Lord thy God am a jealous God,*" Exod. xx. He was Lord of heaven and earth, &c. in such sense as the Emperor of China, the Grand Sultan, &c.,—*by courtesy*.

It would be difficult to imagine, and surely impossible to find, among all the formularies of ancient Paganism, any manner of speaking ascribed to their deities more truly contemptible, more egregiously absurd and revolting to common sense, than the language which their lively oracles put into the mouth of their deity. Sometimes he is described as roaring like a lion, at others as hissing like a snake, as burning with rage, and unable to restrain his own passions, as kicking, smiting, cursing, swearing, smelling, vomiting, repenting, being grieved at his heart, his fury coming up in his face, his nostrils smoking, &c. For which our Christian divines have invented the apology, "that these things are spoken thus, in accommodation to the weakness of human conceptions," and ἀνθρωποπαθείς as *humanly suffering*; without, however, allowing benefit of the same apology, to throw any sort of palliation over the grossnesses of the literal sense of the Pagan theology. It is well known, that the Pagan wor-

* Judges xi. 24.

† Joshua x. 42.

‡ Judges i. 19. And *note well*, that this Chemosh, called in I. Kings xi. 7. the abomination of Moab, is none other than the Christian Messiah, or Sun of Righteousness, of Malachi iii. 20, or iv. 2.

ship by no means involved such a real prostration of intellect, and such an absolute surrender of the senses and reason, as is involved in the Christian notion of paying divine honours. It often meant no more than a habit of holding the thing so said to be worshipped, in a particular degree of attachment, as many Christians carry about them a lucky penny, or a curious pebble, keepsakes or mementos of past prosperity, or something which is to recall to their minds those agreeable associations of idea, which

“ Lingerin' haunt the greenest spot
On mem'ry's waste.”

Thus the Egyptian's worship of onions, however at first view ridiculous and childish, and exposing him to the scorn and sarcasm both of Christian and Heathen satirists;* in his own view and representation of the matter, (which surely is as fairly to be taken into the account as the representations of those who would never give themselves the trouble to investigate what had once moved their laughter,) by no means implied that he took the onion itself to be a god, or forgot or neglected its culinary uses as a vegetable. The respect he paid to it referred to a high and mystical order of astronomical speculations, and was purely emblematical. The onion presented to the eye of the Egyptian visionary, the most curious type in nature of the disposition and arrangement of the great solar system. “Supposing the root and top of the head to represent the two poles, if you cut any one transversely or diagonally, you will find it divided into the same number of spheres, including each other, counting from the sun or centre to the circumference, as they knew the motions or courses of the orbs (or planets) divided the fluid system of the heavens into; and so the divisions represented the courses of those orbs.” This observation of Mr. Hutchinson† has since been made or borrowed by Dr. Shaw, who observes, that “the onion, upon account of the root of it, which consists of many coats enveloping each other, like the orbs (orbits) in the planetary system, was another of their sacred vegetables.”‡ Our use of these observations, how-

* *Porrum et cepe nefas violare et frangere morsu.*

O sanctas gentes, quibus hæc nascuntur in hortis

Numina!

Juvenal Sat. 15. lin. 9. 11.

A sin, forsooth, to violate and break by biting the leek and onions. A holy people, in whose gardens these divinities are born!

† *His works*, vol. 4. p. 262.

‡ *Shaw's Travels*, p. 356.

ever, is only to supply a demonstration that the grossest forms of apparent nonsense and absurdity in which Paganism ever existed, were never more distressed for a good excuse, or the pretence of some plausible emblematical and mystical sense, than Judaism, and that if we acquit the Jewish religion from the charge of extreme folly, there was never any religion on earth that could be fairly convicted of it.

The plurality of the Hebrew word *ALEIM*, for *God*, in the first chapter of Genesis, and in the Old Testament throughout, is urged by orthodox divines as an argument for their favourite doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

The Jews find their text thus burthened with a sense which they themselves disclaim. A similar plural word—*THE HEAVENS*—expressive of precisely the same sense, where plurality is by no means the leading idea, is found in our own language, and among all nations whose ideas of deity were drawn as our own evidently are, from the visible heavens, the imaginary ceiling of an upper story, in which the Deity was supposed to reside.

The Hebrew שֵׁמִיִּם *Shemmim*, and the Chaldee שְׁמַיָּא *Shemmai*, are in like manner plural words—literally, *the heavens*, and used synonymously with אֱלֹהִים *Alehim*—the gods—for God.*

The Pagans used the same plural words, the *gods*, for *God*, although it was to *one* being alone that in the stricter sense that title was applicable. We use precisely the same plural form, "*Heavens defend us!*" synecdochically for *God defend us!* as in that beautiful and moral apostrophe of King Lear—

"—————Take physic, pomp !
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,
And show *the heavens* more just." SHAKESPEARE.

that is, show God more just.

This, our adherence to the Pagan phrase, happens to be consecrated by the text of the New Testament,† in

* Daniel iv. 26. "Thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee after that thou shalt have known that *THE HEAVENS* do rule," i. e. that *GOD*, i. e. that the *MOST HIGH*, above our heads, doth rule. By the *heavens*, says Parkhurst, are signified the true *Aleim*, or persons of *Jehovah*. Heb. Lex. p. 741. 1.

† Matt. xxi. 25.—Mark xi. 30, 31. Luke xv. 18. xx. 4, 5.—John iv. 27.
Ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. The kingdom of the heavens and the
Ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ. kingdom of God are throughout *Matthew* and *Mark* interchangeable.

which the kingdom of the heavens, and the kingdom of God, and GOD, and THE HEAVENS, are perfectly synonymous, and used indifferently for the expression of precisely the same sense. Not a plurality of THREE, then, nor of any definite number, was implied by that plural noun used with the verb singular, in the Jewish *Alehim*, but merely that vague reference to the planets, from which the very name of God is derived,* and to which the primitive idea of all the multifarious modifications of idolatry or piety, superstition or religion, may ultimately be traced. The Jews themselves are as justly chargeable with polytheism, as the nations whose spiritual advantages they affect to despise.

Their historian, Josephus, who lived and wrote about sixty years after Christ, sought in vain for the testimony of Egyptian authors to support the high pretensions he advanced. Not one has so much as mentioned the prodigies of Moses, or held out the least glimpse of probability or coincidence to his romantic tale.

The whole fable of Moses, however, will be found in the Orphic verses sung in the orgies of Bacchus, as celebrated in Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece, for ages before such a people as the Jewish nation were known to be in existence. (*See the chapter on Bacchus, in this DIEGESIS.*)

Christianity, however, is not so essentially connected with the Jewish religion as to stand or fall with it. Paley and other of the shrewder advocates of the established faith have intimated their wish that the two systems were considered as more independent of each other than they are generally held to be. There might be evidence enough left for the Christian religion, though

* Θεός which is the source of the Æolic dialect, or Latin DEUS, from *ἵκω ἵκινυ, currere, to run* as do the planets.

The Grecian philosophers generally believed that *nature is God*. No authors of any order of Christians whatever, in any of their writings, give us any positive idea on the subject, nor indeed any negative one, not derived from some or other of those philosophers.

"The Yesûs of the New Testament preached only a sort of indeterminate, or at most, only Pharisaical deism. Those who have professed and called themselves Christians, have been 'hardly such characters as any rational mind could imagine to have been the followers of such a master. Animated only with a furious zeal against idolatry, to which Yesus does not allude, these iconoclasts (*image-breakers*) seem to have maintained few positive metaphysical dogmata, till they wanted excuses for plundering from one another the plunder of Paganism.'" I take this sentence from a treatise, entitled, *Various Definitions of an Important Word*, p. 18, in a printed but unpublished work of a learned and excellent friend.

the Mosaic dispensation were considered as altogether fabulous ; and some have thought, that the evidence of Christianity would gain by a dissolution of partnership ; and a man might be the better Christian, as he certainly would be better able to defend his Christianity, by throwing over the whole of the Old Testament as indefensible, and contenting himself entirely with the sufficient guidance and independent sanctions of the New. “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,”* is an apothegm which Christians receive as of the highest authority : and yet no conceivable sense can be found in those words, short of an indication not only of distinctness, but of absolute contrariety of character, between the two religions. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” in the antithesis, can imply nothing else than that neither grace nor truth came by Moses ; to say nothing of those innumerable contemptuous manners of speaking of the old dispensation, as “*those weak and beggarly elements*,”† and that “*burthen which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear* ;”‡ “all that ever came before me are thieves and robbers ;”§ in which Christ and the Apostles themselves refer to the religion of Moses. Certainly, none with whom we have to deal would ever care to defend Judaism, if once induced to doubt the independent challenges of Christianity. If this be untenable, that may very well be left to shift for itself in the wardrobes of Hollywell-street and the Minories. “The lion preys not upon carcases !”

It is unquestionable, however, that even if the gospel story were altogether a romance, and all its *dramatis personæ*, as connected with what is called in poetical language, its *machinery*, merely imaginary, it is still a romance of that character, which mixes up its fantastical personages with *real* characters, and fastens events which never happened, speeches which were never spoken, and doings which were never done, on persons, times, and places that had a real existence, and stood in the relations assigned to them. So that the romance is properly *dramatical*, and answers to the character of such ingenious and entertaining fictions, as in our own days are called romances of the particular century to which they are assigned, in which of course we have the Sir Rowlands, Sir Olivers, and Sir Mortimers of the author’s invention,

* John i. 17.

† Acts xv. 10.

‡ Galat. ix.

§ John x. 8.

transacting business and holding dialogues with the Saladins, King Richards, Henrys, and Edwards of real history. Nor are there wanting instances of plagiarism in the department of fiction. A shrewd novelist will often avail himself of an old story, will change the scene of action from one country to another, throw it further back, or bring it lower down, in the order of time; and make the heroes of the original conceit, contemporaries and comrades of either an earlier or a later race of real personages.

“Josephus, and heathen authors have made mention of Herod, Archelaus, Pontius Pilate, and other persons of note, whose names we meet with in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, and have delivered nothing material concerning their characters, posts, and honours, that is different from what the writers of the New Testament have said of them.”

Such is the first of Dr. Lardner's arguments for the credibility of the gospel history, the sophism of which will in an instant start into observance, upon putting the simple questions—What is material? And is it no fatal deficiency, that they should have omitted to mention what they by no possibility could have omitted to mention, had the personages so spoken of been so concerned in the gospel history, as they are therein represented to have been?

One of the most striking coincidences of the scriptural and profane history, is the reference to the death of Herod, in Acts xii. 21. 23, as compared with the account given by Josephus, whose words are, “Having now reigned three whole years over all Judea, Herod went to the city Cæsarea. Here he celebrated shows in honour of Cæsar. On the second day he came into the theatre dressed in a robe of silver of most curious workmanship. The rays of the sun, then just rising, reflected from so splendid a garb, gave him a majestic and awful appearance. In a short time they began in several parts of the theatre flattering acclamations, which proved pernicious to him. They called him a god, and entreated him to be propitious to them, saying, ‘Hitherto we have respected you as a man, but now we acknowledge you to be more than mortal.’ The King neither reproved those persons, nor rejected the impious flattery. Soon after this,* casting

* Ανακνυσας δ' αν τον βυβωνα της εαυτη κεφαλης υπερκαθεζομενον ειδεν επι σχοινη τινος αγγελον τε τωτον ευθυς ετομσεν κακων ειναι τον και ποτε των αγαθων γινομενον και διακαριον εσχεν οδυνην.—Antiq. lib. 19. c. 8. sect. 2.

his eyes upwards, he saw an owl sitting upon a rope over his head. He perceived it to be a messenger of evil to him, as it had been before of his prosperity, and was grieved at heart. Immediately after this he was affected with extremely violent pains in his bowels, and turning to his friends, in anguish said, 'I, your God, am required to leave this world; fate instantly confuting the false applauses you have bestowed on me; I, who have been called immortal, am hurried away to death; but God's appointment must be submitted to.' These pains in his bowels continually tormenting him, he died on the fifth day, in the fiftyfourth year of his age, and of his reign the seventh."

There is a curious ambiguity in the Greek word for messenger (*angelos*), of which Eusebius availing himself, says nothing about the owl, but gives as the text of Josephus, that *he beheld an angel hanging over his head upon a rope, and this he knew immediately to be an omen of evil.** Lardner justly reproves this fault in Eusebius, but has no reproof for the author of the Acts of the Apostles, who was privileged to improve the story still farther by adding, that *the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the clary*, (i. e. the spangles and gaudery of his silver dress.) This Herod was a deputy king holding his power under the appointment of Caius Caligula.

The PHARISEES were a sect of self-righteous and sanctimonious hypocrites, ready to play into and keep up any religious farce that might serve to invest them with an imaginary sanctity of character, and increase their influence over the minds of the majority, whose good nature and ignorance in all ages and countries, is but ever too ready to subscribe the claims thus made upon it.

They were the Quakers of their day, a set of commercial, speculating thieves, who expressed their religion in the eccentricity of their garb; and, under professions of extraordinary punctiliousness and humanity, were the most over-reaching, oppressive, and inexorable of the human race. Of this sort was the apostolic chief of sinners, and this character he discovers through all accounts of his life and writings, that have entailed the curse of his example on mankind.

The SADDUCEES were a set of materialists, who, as they were too sensible to be imposed on themselves, were

* Ανακυψας δε της εαυτη κεφαλης υπερκαθεζομενον ειδεν αγγελον επι σχοινης τινος. Τετον εωθυς ενοησε κακων ειναι αιτιον.—Euseb. Ec. Hist. lib. 2. c. 9. B.

the less disposed to cajole others. They were the most respectable part of the Jewish community, and by the influence of their more rational tenets and more moral example, served to infuse that leaven of reason and virtue, without which, the frame of society could hardly be held together.

It is enough to know, in addition to the more than enough that every body may know, of the Mosaic institutions, that the pretensions of the Jews, as a nation, to philosophy, never exceeded that of the dark and hidden science which they called the *Cabbala*, which, like their hidden theology, was nothing more than the Oriental philosophy, plagiarized and modelled to their own conceit, and a crude jumble of the various melancholy notions, which had forced themselves upon their minds in the course of their ramblings into the adjacent countries of Egypt and Phœnicia, and the little that ignorance itself could not help learning, in the course of their traffic with the Greeks, Persians, and Arabians.

Their sacred scriptures of the Old Testament contain no reference to the Platonic doctrine of a future state.* Though the metaphysical notion of the immortality of the soul, had been inculcated and embraced in India, in Assyria, in Egypt, and in Gaul, and was believed with so influential and practical a faith, that its votaries would lend their money to be returned them again in the other world,† (a proof of sincerity less equivocal than martyrdom itself.) Yet this doctrine appears to have been wholly unknown to the Jewish legislator, and is but darkly insinuated in any part of the prophetic writings.‡ Hence the Sadducees, who, according to Josephus, respected only the authority of the Pentateuch (or five books of Moses), had no belief in a resurrection, angels or spirits, or any such chimerical hypostases. Nor does the Christ of the New Testament seem to have had the least idea of the possible existence of the soul, in a state

* The only reward proposed for obedience to the law of God, was, *that attached to the fifth, which is called by the Apostle, the first commandment with promise*—"that thy days may be long in the land."

† *Vetus ille mos Gallorum occurrit*, (says Valerius Maximus, l. 2. c. 6. p. 10.) *quos memoria proditum est, pecunias mutuas dare solitos quas his, apud inferos redderentur.*

‡ It is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell. It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.—Mark ix. 45. 47. Here was no idea of heaven, or the state of the blessed, above a hospital of incurables.

of separation from the body. All his attempts to alarm the cowardice and weakness of his hearers, are founded on the assumption, that the body must accompany the soul in its anabasis to heaven, or its descent to hell, and indeed that there was no virtual distinction between them. It must, however, be admitted to be a good and valid apology for the omission—that none of his followers have been able to supply the deficiency.



CHAPTER V.

STATE OF PHILOSOPHY.

THERE is nothing that can be known of past ages, known with more unquestionable certainty, than that *in, about,* and immediately after the epocha of time ascribed to the dawning of divine light, the human mind seems generally to have suffered an eclipse. The arts and sciences, intelligence and virtue, were smitten with an unaccountable palsy. The mind of man lost all its energies, and sunk under a generally prevailing imbecility. We look in vain among the successors of Cicero, Livy, Tacitus, Horace, and Virgil, the statesmen, orators, and poets of the golden age of literature, for a continuation of the series of such ornaments of human nature. A blight had smitten the growth of men's understandings; not only no more such clever men rose up, but with very few exceptions, no more such men as could have appreciated the talents of their predecessors, or possessing so much as the relative degree of capacity, necessary to be sensible of the superiority that had preceded them. After reasonings so just, and eloquence so powerful, that even so late after the revival of literature as the present day, mankind have not yet learned to reason more justly, or to declaim more powerfully; a race of barbarous idiots possessed themselves of the seat of science and the muses; and all distinction and renown was sought and obtained by absurdities disgraceful to reason, and mortifications revolting to nature. “The groves of the academy, the gardens of Epicurus, and even the porticoes of the Stoics, were deserted as so many different schools of scepticism or impiety, and many among the Romans were desirous that

the writings of Cicero should be condemned and suppressed by the authority of the Senate.”*

The reasoning of which all men see the absurdity, when applied by the victorious Caliph to justify the destruction of the library of Alexandria,† appeared unanswerable when adduced on the side of the true faith.

Omar issued his commands for the destruction of that celebrated library, to his general, Amrus, in these words: “As to the books of which you have made mention, if there be contained in them what accords with the book of God (meaning the Koran of Mahomet), there is without them, in the book of God, all that is sufficient. But if there be any thing in them repugnant to that book, we in no respect want them. Order them, therefore, to be all destroyed.” —*Harris*.

Precisely similar in spirit, and almost in form, are the respective decrees of the Emperors Constantine and Theodosius, which generally ran in the words, “that all writings adverse to the claims of the Christian religion, in the possession of whomsoever they should be found, should be committed to the fire,” as the pious Emperors would not that those things which they took upon themselves to assume, tended to provoke God to wrath, should be allowed to offend the minds of the pious.‡ Mr. Gibbon, in his usual strain of caustic sarcasm, mentions the elaborate treatises which the philosophers, more especially the prevailing sect of the new Platonicians, who endeavoured to extract allegorical wisdom from the fictions of the Greek poets, composed; and the many elaborate treatises against the faith of the Gospel, which have since been committed to the flames, by the *prudence* of orthodox emperors. The large treatise of Porphyry against the Christians, consisted of thirty books, and was composed in Sicily about the year 270. It was against the writings of this great man especially, who had acquired the honourable addition to his name, of THE VIRTUOUS, that the exterminatory decree of Theodosius was more immediately directed. There is little doubt, that had the discoveries his writings would have made, been permitted to come to general knowledge, all the pretended external evidence of Christianity must have been

* Gibbon, ch. 16.

† The destruction of this celebrated library gave safety to the evidences of the Christian religion.

‡ See the decrees quoted in my *Syntagma*, p. 35.

given up as wholly untenable. But while what the virtuous Porphyry had *really* written, was committed to the flames, a worse outrage was committed against his reputation, by Christians, who, aware of the great influence of his name and authority, ascribed the vile trash which they had composed themselves to him, for the purpose of making him seem to have made the admissions which it was for the interest of Christianity that he should have made, or to have attacked it so feebly, as might serve to show the advantage of their defences. The celebrated treatise on the Philosophy of Oracles, which even the pious Doddridge, and the learned Macknight, have ascribed to this great man, and availed themselves of, for that fraudulent purpose, has, by the greater fidelity and honesty of Lardner, been demonstrably traced home to the forging hands of Christian piety.*

Before the Christian religion had made any perceptible advance among mankind, two grand and influential principles characterized all the moving intelligence that then existed in the world ; and to these two principles, Christianity owed its triumph over all the wisdom and honesty that feebly opposed its progress. These principles were,—the SUPPOSED NECESSITY OF DECEIVING THE VULGAR, and THE IMAGINED DUTY OF CULTIVATING AND PERPETUATING IGNORANCE. Of the former of these principles, the most distinguished advocates were the whole train of deceptive legislators ; Moses in Palestine, Mneues (if he be not the same) in Egypt, Minos in Crete, Lycurgus in Lacedæmon, Numa in Rome, Confucius in China, Triptolemus, who pretended the inspirations of Ceres, Zaleucus of Minerva, Solon of Epimenides, Zamolxis of Vesta, Pythagoras, and Plato.† *Euripides* maintained that in the early state of society, some wise men insisted on the necessity of darkening truth with falsehood, and of persuading men that there is an immortal deity, who hears and sees and understands our actions, whatever we may think of that matter ourselves.‡ *Strabo* shows at great length the general use and important effects of theological fables. “It is not possible for a philosopher to conduct by reasoning a multitude of women, and of the low vulgar, and thus to invite them to piety, holiness, and faith ;

* *Περὶ τῆς ἐκ λόγιων φιλοσοφίας.* See this exposé in my *Syntagma*, p. 116.

† It will be seen that I have largely availed myself of my friend's printed but unpublished work on Deisidemony.

‡ Quoted in the pseudo-Plutarchean treatise, *de placitis philos.* B. 1, Ch. 7.

but the philosopher must also make use of superstition, and not omit the invention of fables, and the performance of wonders. For the lightning, and the ægis, and the trident, and the thyrsolonical arms of the gods, are but fables; and so is all ancient theology. But the founders of states adopted them as bugbears to frighten the weak-minded.”*

Varro says plainly, “that there are many truths which it is useless for the vulgar to know, and many falsities which it is fit that the people should not know are falsities.”†

Paul of Tarsus, whose fourteen epistles make up the greater part of the bulk of the New Testament, repeatedly inculcates and avows the principle of deceiving the common people, talks of his having been upbraided by his own converts with being crafty and catching them with guile,‡ and of his known and wilful lies, abounding to the glory of God.§ For further avowals of this principle of deceit, the reader may consult the chapter of Admissions.

Accessory to the avowed and consecrated principle of deceit, was that of IGNORANCE. St. Paul, in the most explicit language, had taught and maintained the absolute necessity of extreme ignorance, in order to attain celestial wisdom, and gloried in the power of the Almighty as destroying the wisdom of the wise, and bringing to nothing, the understanding of the prudent; and purposely choosing the foolish things, and the weak things, and the base things,|| as objects of his adoption, and vessels of his grace. And St. Peter, or whoever was the author of the epistles ascribed to him, inculcates the necessity of the most absolute prostration of understanding, and of a state of mind, but little removed from slobbering idiotcy, as necessary to the acquisition of divine knowledge; that even “as new born babes, they should desire the sincere milk of the word, that they might grow thereby.”¶

Upon the sense of which doctrine, the pious and orthodox Tertullian glories in the egregious ridiculous-

* Dr. Isaac Vossius, when asked what had become of a certain man of letters, answered bluntly, “*he has turned country parson, and is deceiving the vulgar.*”—See Desmaiseaux’s Life of St. Evremond.

† *August. de Cio. Dei.* B. 4.

‡ 2 Corinth. xii. 16.

§ Romans iii. 7.

|| 1 Corinth. i. 27.

¶ 1 Peter ii. 2. 1 Thess. ii. 7, “Even as a nurse cherisheth her children.” Compare also 2 Corinth. xi. 23, where Paul says, “I speak as a fool,” which he need not have said.

ness of the Christian religion, and the debilitating effects which the sincere belief of it had produced on his own understanding : his main argument for it, being, "I reverence it, because it is contemptible ; I adore it, because it is absurd ; I believe it, because it is impossible."*

Nothing was considered more obnoxious to the cause of the gospel, than the good sense contained in the writings of its opponents. The inveteracy against learning, of Gregory the Great, to whom this country owes its conversion to the gospel, was so excessive, that he not only was angry with an Archbishop of Vienna, for suffering grammar to be taught in his diocese, but studied to write bad Latin himself, and boasted that he scorned to conform to the rules of grammar, whereby he might seem to resemble a heathen.† The spirit of superstition quite suppressed all the efforts of learning and philosophy.

Christianity was first sent to the shores of England by the missionary zeal of Pope Gregory the First, not earlier than the sixth or the beginning of the seventh century. Our King Alfred, who is said to have founded the University of Oxford, in the ninth century, lamented that there was at that time not a priest in his dominions who understood Latin,‡ and even for some centuries after, we find that our Christian bishops and prelates, the "teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters," of the whole Christian community, were *Marksmen*, i. e. they supplied by the sign of the cross, their inability to write their own names.§

Though philology, eloquence, poetry, and history, were sedulously cultivated among those of the Greeks and Latins, who in the fourth century still held out their resistance against the Christian religion : its just and honourable historian, Mosheim, admonishes his readers by no means to conclude that any acquaintance with the sciences had become universal in the church of Christ.|| "It is certain, (he adds) that the greatest part both of the bishops and presbyters, were men entirely destitute of learning and education. Besides, that savage and illiterate party, who looked upon all sorts of erudition, particularly

* De carne Christi Semleri, Edit. Halæ Magdeburgicæ, 1770, vol. 3, p. 352. Quoted in Syntagma, page 106.

† Dr. Mandeville's Free Thoughts, page 152.

‡ See History of England, almost any one.

§ Evans's Sketches.

|| Ecclesiastical History, Cent. 4, part 2, chap. 1, sec. 5, p. 346.

that of a philosophical kind, as pernicious, and even destructive of true piety and religion, increased both in number and authority. The ascetics, monks, and hermits, augmented the strength of this barbarous faction, and not only the women, but also all who took solemn looks, sordid garments, and a love of solitude, for real piety, (and in this number we comprehend the generality of mankind) were vehemently prepossessed in their favour."

Happily the security and permanency given to the once won triumphs of learning over her barbarous foes, by the invention of the art of printing,* the now extensive spread of rational scepticism, and the never again to be surrendered achievements of superior intelligence, have forced upon the advocates of *ignorance*, the necessity of expressing their still too manifest suspicions and hostility against the cause of general learning, in more guarded and qualified terms. But what they still *would* have, the sameness of their principle, the identity of their purpose, and the sincerity of their conviction that the cultivation of the mind, and the continuance of the Christian religion, are incompatible, is indicated in the institution of an otherwise superfluous university in the city of London, for the avowed purpose of counteracting the well foreseen effects of suffering learning to get her pass into the world untrammelled with the fetters of superstition. The advertisement of subscriptions to the intended King's College, in the *Times* newspaper, even so late as the 16th of this present month of August, in which I write from this prison, in the cause and advocacy of intellectual freedom, avows the principle in these words:—"We, the undersigned, fully concurring in the FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES on which it is proposed to be established, namely, that every principle of general education for the youth of a Christian community, ought to comprise instruction in the Christian religion, as an *indispensable part*; without which, the acquisition of other branches of knowledge, will be conducive neither to the happiness, nor to the welfare of the state." In other words, and most

* In the year 1444, Caxton published the first book ever printed in England. In 1474, the then Bishop of London, in a convocation of his clergy, said, "*If we do not destroy this dangerous invention, it will one day destroy us.*" The reader should compare Pope Leo the Tenth's avowal, that "*it was well known how profitable this fable of Christ has been to us:*" with Mr. Beard's Apology for it, in his third letter to the Rev. Robert Taylor, page 74, and Archdeacon Paley's declaration, that "*he could not afford to have a conscience.*"—See Life of the Author attached to his work on the Evidences of Christianity, p. 11. London 12mo. edit. 1826.

unequivocally in the sense intended, the utmost extent of learning which the university propounds, will never reach to the rendering any of its members competent to conflict with the learning of the enemies of the Christian faith; to produce either orators who dare attempt to vie on equal grounds with *their* orators; readers, who dare trust their conscious inferiority of understanding to *read*, or writers that shall have ability or disposition to answer their writings. The old barbarous policy of Goth and Vandal ignorance, to suppress and commit to the flames the writings of Infidels, to decry their virtues, and to imprison their persons; to shelter conscious weakness under airs of affected contempt; to crush the man when they can no longer cope with his argument, to destroy the reasoner, when they dare not encounter his reasoning, is still the dernier resource of a system, that cannot be defended by other means, but must needs be left in the dust from whence it sprang, whenever the mind of man shall be allowed to get a fair start, without being clogged with it.

“In consequence of the conquests of the Romans, there arose imperceptibly, but entirely by the operation of natural and most obvious causes, a new kind of religion, formed by the mixture of the ancient rites of the conquered nations with those of the Romans. Those nations, who before their subjection, had their own gods, and their own particular religious institutions, were persuaded *by degrees*, to admit into their worship, a great number of the sacred rites and customs of their conquerors.”* And from this conjunction, helped on or retarded from time to time, by those exacerbations and paroxysms, which ever attend the fever of religion, as it afflicts the sincerely religious, and the policy of those wicked tacticians, who have always known how to raise or lower the spiritual temperament to their purpose, arose that heterogeneous compound of all that was good and all that was bad in all religions, which, after having existed under various names and modifications, and gained by gradual usurpations a considerable ascendancy over any or all the idolatrous forms from which it had been collected, began to be called Christianity. “The wiser part of mankind, however, (says Mosheim) about the time of Christ’s birth, looked upon the whole system of religion, as a just object of contempt and ridicule.”†

* Mosheim, Cent. 1.

† Mosheim, Cent. I. Ch. 1.

"About the time of Christ's appearance upon earth,* there were two kinds of philosophy which prevailed among the civilized nations. One was the philosophy of the Greeks, adopted also by the Romans; and the other, that of the Orientals, which had a great number of votaries in Persia, Syria, Chaldea, Egypt, and even among the Jews."

The Greek and Roman mode of thought and reasoning, was designated by the simple title of *PHILOSOPHY*.†

That of the eastern nations, as opposed to it, was called *GNOSTICISM*.‡

The *Philosophy*, signified only the love and pursuit of wisdom.

The *Gnosis*, signified the perfection and full attainment of wisdom itself.

The followers of both these systems, as we might naturally suppose, split and subdivided into innumerable sects and parties. It must be observed, however, that while the *Philosophers*, or those of the Grecian and Roman school, were infinitely divided, and held no common principle of union among themselves, some of them being opposed to all religion whatever; the *Gnostics*, or adherents of the oriental system, deduced all their various tenets from one fundamental principle, that of their common *deism*, and universally professed themselves to be the restorers of the knowledge of God, which was lost in the world. St. Paul mentions and condemns both these modes of thought and reasoning; that of the Greeks, in his Epistle to the Colossians, and that of the Orientals, in his first to Timothy.§

The *Gnosis*, or *Gnosticism*, comprehends the doctrine of the Magi,|| the philosophy of the Persians, Chaldeans, and Arabians, and the wisdom of the Indians and Egyptians. It is distinctly to be traced in the text and doctrines of the New Testament. It was from the bosom of this pretended *oriental wisdom*, that the chiefs of those sects, which, in the three first centuries, perplexed the Christian church, *originally* issued. The name itself signified, that its professors taught *the way to the true knowledge of the*

* Our author means any time about or near the era of Augustus.

† ἡ φιλοσοφία.

‡ ἡ γνῶσις.

§ Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit.—Coloss. ii. 8. Avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called.—1 Tim. vi. 20,

|| The Magi, or wise men of the east, (Matthew ii. 1,) i. e. the Brahmins, who first got up the allegorical story of *CHRISHNA*.

Deity. Their most distinguished sect inculcated the notion of a triumvirate of beings, in which the *Supreme Deity* was distinguished both from the *material evil principle*, and from the creator of this sublunary world.

The *PHILOSOPHY*, comprehended the *Epicureans*, the most virtuous and rational of men, who maintained that wisely consulted *pleasure*, was the ultimate end of man; the *Academics*, who placed the height of wisdom in doubt and scepticism; the *Stoics*, who maintained a fortitude indifferent to all events; the *Aristotelians*, who, after their master, Aristotle, held the most subtle disputations concerning God, religion, and the social duties, maintaining that the nature of God resembles the principle that gives motion to a machine, that it is happy in the contemplation of itself, and entirely regardless of human affairs; the *Platonists*, from their master, *Plato*, who taught the immortality of the soul, the doctrine of the trinity, of the manifestation of a divine man, who should be crucified, and the eternal rewards and punishments of a future life; and from all these resulting, the *Eclectics*, who, as their name signifies, *elected* and chose what they held to be wise and rational, out of the tenets of *all* sects, and rejected whatever was considered futile and pernicious. The *Eclectics* held *Plato* in the highest reverence. Their college or chief establishment was at *Alexandria* in *Egypt*. Their founder was supposed to have been one *Potamon*. The most indubitable testimonies prove, that *this Philosophy* was in a flourishing state, at the period assigned to the birth of Christ. The *Eclectics* are the same whom we find described as the *Therapeuts* or *Essenes* of *Philo*, and whose sacred writings are, by *Eusebius*, shown to be the same as our gospels. Nought, but the supposed expediency of deceiving the vulgar, and of perpetuating ignorance, hinders the historian to whom I am, for the substance of this chapter, so much indebted, from acknowledging the fact, that in every rational sense that can be attached to the word, they were the authors and real founders of Christianity.

CHAPTER VI.

ADMISSIONS OF CHRISTIAN WRITERS.

IN studying the writings of the early advocates of Christianity, and fathers of the Christian church; where we should naturally look for the language that would indicate

the real occurrence of the facts of the gospel, if real occurrences they had ever been ; not only do we find no such sort of language, but every where, find we, any sort of sophistical ambages, ramblings from the subject, and evasions of the very business before them, as if of purpose to balk our research, and insult our scepticism. If we travel to the very sepulchre of Christ, we have only to discover that he was never there : history seeks evidence of his existence as a man, but finds no more trace of it, than of the shadow that flitted across the wall. The star of Bethlehem shone not upon her path, and the order of the universe was suspended without her observance. She asks with the Magi of the east, "where is he that is born King of the Jews," and like them, finds no solution of her inquiry, but the guidance that guides as well to one place as another ; descriptions that apply to Esculapius, as well as to Jesus ; prophecies, without evidence that they were ever prophesied ; miracles, which those who are said to have seen, are said also to have denied that they saw ; narratives without authorities, facts without dates, and records without names.

Where we should naturally look for the evidence of recentness, and a mode of expression suitable to the character of witnesses, or of those who had conversed with witnesses, we not only find no such modes of expression ; but both the recorded language and actions of the parties, are found to be entirely incongruous, and out of keeping with the supposition of such a character. We find the discourses of the very first preachers and martyrs of this religion, outraging all chronology, by claiming the honours of an even then remote antiquity, for the doctrines they taught.

1. We find St. Stephen,* the very first martyr of Christianity, in the very city where its stupendous events are supposed to have happened, and, as our Bible chronologies inform us, within the very year in which they happened ; and on the very occasion on which above all others that could be imagined, he *must*, and would have borne testimony to them, as constituting the evidences of his faith, the justification of his conduct, and the grounds of his martyrdom ; nevertheless, bearing no such testimony ; yea ! not so much as glancing at those events, but found-

* STEPHEN, a name of the same order as Nicodemus, Philip, Andrew, Alexander, &c., entirely of Grecian origin, ascribed to Jews, who never had such names, nor any like them.

ing his whole argument on the ancient legends of the Jewish superstition. What a falling off is there !

2. We find St. Paul, the very first Apostle of the Gentiles, expressly avowing that "he was made a minister of the gospel, which had already been preached to every creature under heaven ;" (Col. i. 23,) preaching a god manifest in the flesh, who had been "believed on in the world," (1 Tim. iii. 16,) before the commencement of his ministry ; and who therefore could have been no such person as the man of Nazareth, who had certainly *not* been preached at that time, nor generally believed on in the world, till ages after that time.

3. We find him, moreover, out of all character and consistency of circumstance, assuming the most intolerant airs of arrogance, and snubbing Peter at Antioch, as if *he* were nobody, or had absolutely been preaching a false doctrine, of which Paul were the more proper judge, and the higher authority. A circumstance absolutely demonstrative that the Peter of the Acts was no such person as the Peter of the Gospels, who would certainly not have suffered himself to be called over the coals, by one who was but a new setter up in the business, but would in all probability have cut his ear off, rapt out a good oath or two, or knock him down with his keys, for such audacious presumption.

4. It is most essentially remarkable, that as these Acts of the Apostles bear internal evidence of being a much later production than the epistles and gospels, and are evidently mixed up with the journals of real adventures of some travelling missionaries ; they are not mentioned with the epistles and gospels which had constituted the ancient writings of the Therapeutæ. Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, (A. D. 393,) informs us, that at that time, "this book was unknown to many, and by others it was despised."

5. MILL, one of the very highest authorities in biblical literature, tells us, "that the gospels were soon spread abroad, and came into all men's hands ; but the case was somewhat different with the other books of the New Testament, particularly the Acts of the Apostles, which were not thought to be so important, and had few transcribers."

6. And BEAUSOBRE acknowledges, that the book of the Acts, had not at the beginning in the eastern churches, the same authority with the gospels and the epistles.

7. LARDNER, (vol. 2, p. 605,) would rather give St. Chrysostom the lie, than surrender to the pregnant consequence of so fatal an admission. The gospels were soon received, for they were ready before the world was awake. The Acts were a second attempt. Where we should look for marks of distinction, as definite as those which must necessarily and eternally exist between truth and falsehood, between divine wisdom and human weakness, between what man knew by the suggestion of his own unassisted shrewdness, and what he only could have known by the further instruction of divine revelation; not only find we no such lines or characters of distinction, but alas! in the stead and place thereof, we find the most entire and perfect amalgamation, an entire surrender of all challenge to distinction, a complete capitulation, going over, and "hail-fellow-well-met" conjunction, of Jesus and Jupiter. Christianity and Paganism are frankly avowed to have been never more distinct from each other, than six from half-a-dozen, never to have been at variance or divided, but by the mere accidental substitution of one set of names for the other, and the very trifling and immaterial misunderstanding, that the new nomenclature had occasioned.

"Some of the ancientest writers of the church have not scrupled expressly to call the Athenian SOCRATES, and some others of the best of the heathen moralists, by the name of CHRISTIANS, and to affirm, that as the law was as it were a schoolmaster, to bring the Jews unto Christ, so true moral philosophy was to the Gentiles a preparative to receive the gospel."—*Clarke's Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion*, p. 284.

8.* "And those who lived according to the Logos, (says Clemens Alexandrinus) were really Christians, though they have been thought to be Atheists; as Socrates and Heraclitus were among the Greeks, and such as resembled them."

9.† For God, says Origen, revealed these things to them, and whatever things have been well spoken.

10.‡ And if there had been any one to have collected

* Καὶ οἱ μετὰ λόγῳ βιωσαντες, χριστιανοὶ εἰσι, π' ἂν ἄθεοι ἐνομισθῆσαν οἷον ἐν Ἑλλήσι ἦεν Σωκράτης καὶ Ἡρακλεῖτος καὶ οἱ ὅμοιοι αὐτοῖς.—Clemens Alex. Strom.

† Ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτοῖς τὰντα, καὶ ὅσα καλῶς λελεχται ἐφανερώσῃ.—Orig. ad Cels. lib. 6.

‡ Quod si extitisset aliquis qui veritatem sparsam per singulos, per sectasque omnem colligeret in unam, ac redigeret in corpus, is profecto non dissentiret a nobis."—*Lactant, lib. 7.*

the truth that was scattered and diffused, says Lactantius, among sects and individuals, into one, and to have reduced it into a system, there would, indeed, have been no difference between him and us.

11.* And if Cicero's works, says Arnobius, had been read as they ought to have been by the heathens, there would have been no need of Christian writers.

12.† “That, in our times is the CHRISTIAN RELIGION, (says St. Augustin,) which to know and follow is the most sure and certain health, called according to that name, but not according to the thing itself, of which it is the name; for the thing itself, which is now called the CHRISTIAN RELIGION, really was known to the ancients, nor was wanting at any time from the beginning of the human race, until the time when Christ came in the flesh, from whence the true religion, which had previously existed, began to be called *Christian*; and this in our days is the Christian religion, not as having been wanting in former times, but as having in later times received this name.”

13.‡ “What then? and do the philosophers recommend nothing like the precepts of the gospel?” asks Lactantius. Yes, indeed, they do very many, and often approach to truth; only *their* precepts have no weight, as being merely human and devoid of that greater and divine authority; and nobody believes, because the hearer thinks himself as much a man, as he is who prescribes them.

14. Monsieur Daillee, in his most excellent treatise, called, *La Religion Catholique Romaine, instituée par Numa Pompile*, demonstrates, that “the Papists took their idolatrous worship of images, as well as all other ceremonies from the old heathen religion,” and

15. Ludovicus Vivus, a learned Catholic, confesses,

* So quoted and translated by Tindal, in his “Christianity as Old as the Creation,” p. 397.

† Ea est nostris temporibus Christiana religio, quam cognoscere ac sequi securissima et certissima salus est: secundum hoc nomen dictum est non secundum ipsam rem cujus hoc nomen est: nam res ipsa quæ nunc Christiana religio nuncupatur erat et apud antiquos, nec defuit ab initio generis humani, quousque ipse Christus veniret in carne, unde vera religio quæ jam erat cæpit appellari Christiana. Hæc est nostris temporibus Christiana religio, non quia prioribus temporibus non fuit, sed quia posterioribus hoc nomen accepit.—Opera Augustini, vol. 1, p. 12. Basil edit. 1529.

‡ Quid ergo, nihil ne illi (philosophi) simile præcipiant? Immo permulta et ad veritatem frequenter accedunt. Sed nihil ponderis habent illa præcepta, quia sunt humana, et auctoritate majori id est divina, illa carent. Nemo igitur credit; quia tam se hominem putat esse qui audit, quam est ille qui præcipit.—Lactant lib. 3, ut Citat Clarke, p. 301:

that "there could be found no other difference between Paganish and Popish worship before images, but only this, that names and titles are changed."—*Quoted in Blount's Philostratus*, p. 113, 114.

16.* Epiphanius freely admits, of all the heretical forms of Christianity, that is, of all that differed from his own, that they were derived from the heathen mythology.

17. The Manichees, the most distinguished of all who dissented from the established church, and unquestionably the most intelligent and learned of all who ever professed and called themselves Christians, boasted of being in possession of a work called the Theosophy, or the Wisdom of God; (and such a work we actually find quoted by St. Paul, 1 Corinth. 2,) in which the purport was to show,† that Judaism, Paganism, and Manicheism, i. e. as they understood it, *Christianity*, were one and the same religion, and

18. Even our own orthodox Bishop Burnet, in his treatise *De Statu Mortuorum*, purposely written in Latin, that it might serve for the instruction of the clergy only, and not come to the knowledge of the laity, because, as he says, "too much light is hurtful for weak eyes;" not only justifies, but recommends the practice of the most consummate hypocrisy, and that too, on the most awful of all subjects; and would have his clergy seriously preach and maintain the reality and eternity of hell torments, even though they should believe nothing of the sort themselves.‡

What is this, but an edition, by a Christian bishop, of the very sentiment which Cicero reproves in Pagan philosophers:—"Quid? ii qui dixerunt totam de Diis immortalibus opinionem fictam esse ab hominibus sapientibus, Reipublicæ causa, ut quos Ratio non posset, eos ad officium Religio duceret, nonne omnem religionem funditus sustulerunt."—*De Nat. Deor. lib. 1, ch. 42, p. 405.*—Can there be any doubt, that Bishop Burnet, with all his cant about converting the Earl of Rochester, was himself an Atheist?

19. Dr. Mosheim, among his many and invaluable

* Εκ γὰρ ἐλληνικῶν μύθων πασαι αἱ αἱρεσεις συναρξασαι ταυταις την πλανεη καταβολον.—Hier. 26, n. 16, p. 98, D.

† Εν η πειραται δεικνυται τον ιουδαισμον και τον αλληρισμον και τον μανηχαισμον ειναι και το αυτο δογμα.—Fabricius, tom. 1, p. 354.

‡ Si me tamen audire velis, malletm te pueras has dicere indefinitas quam infinitas. —Sed veniet dies, cum non minus absurda, habebitur et odiosa hæc opinio quam transubstantiatio hodie.—*De Statu Mort. p. 304.*

writings, published a dissertation, showing the reasons and causes of supposititious writings in the first and second century. And all own, says Lardner, that Christians of all sorts were guilty of this fraud ; indeed, we may say, it was one great fault of the times.*

20.† “ And in the last place, (says the great Casaubon,) it mightily affects me, to see how many there were in the *earliest* times of the church, who considered it as a capital exploit, to lend to heavenly truth the help of their own inventions, in order that the new doctrine might be more readily allowed by the wise among the Gentiles. These officious lies, they were wont to say, were devised for a good end. From which source, beyond question, sprung nearly innumerable books, which that and the following age saw published by those who were far from being bad men,‡ (for we are not speaking of the books of heretics,) under the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the apostles, and other saints.”

The reader has only to satisfy himself with his own solution of the question emergent from such an admission. If those who palmed what they knew to be a lie, upon the world, under the name and sanction of a God of truth, are to be considered as still worthy of our confidence, and *far from being bad men*: who are the bad men? *Illud me quoque vehementer movet.*

21. “ There is scarce any church in Christendom at this day, (says one of the church’s most distinguished ornaments) which doth not obtrude, not only plain falsehoods, but such falsehoods as will appear to any free spirit, pure contradictions and impossibilities ; and that with the same gravity, authority, and importunity, as they do the holy oracles of God.”—Dr. Henry Moore.

Here again emerge the anxious queries.—Why should not a man have a free spirit? and what credit can be due to the holy oracles of God, standing on no better evidence

* Lardner, vol. 4, p. 524.

† “ Postremo illud quoque me vehementer movet, quod videam primis ecclesiæ temporibus, quam plurimos extitisse, qui facinus palmarium iudicabant, cælestem veritatem, figmentis suis ire adjutum, quo facilius nova doctrina a gentium sapientibus admitteretur. Officiosa hæc mendacia vocabant bono fine exeogitata. Quo ex fonte dubio procul, sunt orti libri fere sexcenti, quos illa ætas et proxima viderunt, ab hominibus minime malis, (nam de hæreticorum libris non loquimur) sub nomine etiam Domini Jesu Christi et apostolorum aliorumque sanctorum publicatos.”—Casaubon, quoted in Lardner, vol. 4, p. 524.

‡ Mosheim treats these holy forgers with the same tenderness, “ they were men, (he says) whose intentions were not bad.”—Eccl. Hist. vol. 1, p. 109.

of being such, than the testimony of those, who we know have palmed the grossest falsehoods on us, with the same gravity, and as of equal authority with those holy oracles? and

22. "This opinion has always been in the world, that to settle a certain and assured estimation upon that which is good and true, it is necessary to remove out of the way, whatsoever may be an hindrance to it. Neither ought we to wonder, that even those of the honest innocent primitive times made use of these deceits, seeing for a good end they made no scruple to forge whole books."—Daille, on the Use of the Fathers, b. 1, c. 3.

What good end was that, which needed to be prosecuted by the forgery of whole books?

23. "*But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say?*"—Rom. iii. 5. "*For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie, unto his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner?*"—Romans, iii. 7.

24. The apostolic father, *Hermas*, who was the fellow-labourer of St. Paul in the work of the ministry; who is greeted as such in the New Testament: and whose writings are expressly quoted* as of divine inspiration by the early fathers, ingenuously confesses that LYING was the easily-besetting sin of a Christian. His words are,

"O Lord, I never spake a true word in my life, but I have always lived in dissimulation, and affirmed a lie for truth to all men, and no man contradicted me, but all gave credit to my words." To which the holy angel, whom he addresses, condescendingly admonishes him, that "as the lie was up, now, he had better keep it up, and as in time it would come to be believed, it would answer as well as truth."

25. Even Christ himself is represented in the gospels as inculcating the necessity, and setting the example of deceiving and imposing upon the common people, and purposely speaking unto them in parables and double entendres, "*that seeing, they might see, and not perceive; and hearing, they might hear, but not understand.*"—Mark, iv. 12.

* The words of the text are, "Now thou hearest, take care from henceforth, that even those things which thou hast formerly spoken falsely, may by thy present truth, receive credit. For even those things may be credited; if for the time to come, thou shalt speak the truth, and by so doing, thou mayst attain unto life."—Archbishop Wake's *Genuine Epistles of the Apostolic Fathers*, in *loco*. See this article, where HERMAS occurs in the regular succession of apostolic fathers, in this *DIEGESIS*.

26. And divine inspiration, so far from involving any guarantee that truth would be spoken under its immediate influence, is in the scripture itself, laid down as the criterion whereby we may know that nothing in the shape of truth is to be expected :—“ *And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I, the Lord, have deceived that prophet.*—Ezek. xiv. 9.

27. When it was intended that King Ahab should be seduced to his inevitable destruction, God is represented as having employed his faith and piety as the means of his overthrow :—“ *Now, therefore, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all thy prophets.*”—1 Kings, xxii. 23. There were four hundred of them, all speaking under the influence of divine inspiration, all having received the spirit from on high, all of them the servants of God, and engaged in obeying none other than his godly motions, yet lying as fast as if the father of lies himself had commissioned them. Such a set of fellows, so employed, cannot at least but make us suspect some sort of sarcasm in our TE DEUM, where we say, “ *the goodly fellowship of the prophets praise thee.*” The devil would hardly think such sort of praise, a compliment. Happy would it have been for Ahab, had he been an Infidel.

28. The New Testament, however, one might hope, as being a second revelation from God, would have given him an opportunity of “ *repenting of the evil he had spoken ;*” but alas ! orthodoxy itself is constrained to tremble and adore, before that dreadful declaration, than which no religion that ever was in the world besides, ever contained any thing half so horrible :—“ *For this cause, God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned.*”—2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. Such was to be the effect of divine revelation.

Should then, our further prosecution of the inquiry proposed by this DIEGESIS, lead us to the conviction that the amount of evidence for the pretensions of the Christian religion, is as strong as it may be, it will yet remain for an inquiry, which we shall never venture to prosecute, whether that strength of evidence itself, may not be *strong delusion*. Strong enough must that delusion needs be, by which Omnipotence would intend to impose on the credulity and weakness of his creatures. Is it for those who will defend the *apparent* inferences of such a passage, to point out any thing in the grossest conceits, of the

grossest forms of Paganism, that might not have admitted of a palliative interpretation ?

29. St. Paul himself, in an ambiguous text, either openly glories in the avowal, or but faintly repels the charge of practising a continued system of imposture and dissimulation. "*For unto the Jews, (says he) I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. To the weak, became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men.*"—1 Corinth. ix. 22.

30. And in a passage still more pregnant with inference to our great inquiry, (2 Galat. ii.) he distinguishes the gospel which he preached on ordinary occasions, from "*that gospel which he preached privately to them that were of reputation.*"

31. Dr. Mosheim admits, that the Platonists and Pythagoreans held it as a maxim, that it was not only lawful, but praiseworthy to deceive, and even to use the expedient of a *lie*, in order to advance the cause of truth and piety. The Jews who lived in Egypt, had learned and received this maxim from them, before the coming of Christ, as appears incontestibly from a multitude of ancient records, and the Christians were infected from both these sources, with the same pernicious error.—Mosheim, vol. 1. p. 197.

32. In the fourth century, the same great author instructs us "*that it was an almost universally adopted maxim, that it was an act of virtue to deceive and lie, when by such means the interests of the church might be promoted.*"—Vol. 1. p. 198.

33. And as it regards the fifth century, he continues, the simplicity and ignorance of the generality in those times, furnished the most favourable occasion for the exercise of fraud; and the impudence of impostors in contriving false miracles, was artfully proportioned to the credulity of the vulgar: while the sagacious and the wise, who perceived these cheats, were overawed into silence by the dangers that threatened their lives and fortunes, if they should expose the artifice."—Mosheim, Eccl. Hist. vol. 2. p. 11.

34. Nor must we, in any part of our subsequent investigation, quit our hold on the important admission of the fact supplied to us by the research of that most eminent of critics, the great SEMLER—that the *sacred* books of the Christian Scriptures (from which circumstance, it may be, they derive their name of *sacred*) were, during the early

ages of Christianity, really kept *sacred*. "The Christian Doctors (says he) never brought their sacred books before the common people ; although people in general have been wont to think otherwise ; during the first ages, they were in the hands of the clergy only."* I solemnly invoke the rumination of the reader to the inferences with which this admission teems. I write, but cannot think for him. The light is in his hand : what it shall show him, must depend on his willingness to see.

35. How the common people were christianized, we gather from a remarkable passage which Mosheim has preserved for us, in the life of Gregory, surnamed Thaumaturgus, that is, the wonder-worker : the passage is as follows :†

When Gregory perceived that the simple and unskilled multitude persisted in their worship of images, on account of the pleasures and sensual gratifications which they enjoyed at the Pagan festivals, he granted them a permission to indulge themselves in the like pleasures, in celebrating the memory of the holy martyrs, hoping, that in process of time, they would return, of their own accord, to a more virtuous and regular course of life." The historian remarks, that there is no sort of doubt, that by this permission, Gregory allowed the Christians to dance, sport, and feast at the tombs of the martyrs, upon their respective festivals, and to do every thing which the Pagans were accustomed to do in their temples, during the feasts celebrated in honour of their gods."—Mosheim, vol. 1. Cent. 2. p. 202.

36. This accommodating and truly Christian spirit was carried to such an extent, that the images of the Pagan deities were in some instances allowed to remain, and continued to receive divine honours, in Christian churches. The images of the sybills, of which Gallæus has given us prints, were retained in the Christian church of Sienna."‡ —Bell's Panth. 2. 237.

* Christiani doctores non in vulgus prodebant libros sacros, licet soleant plerique aliter opinari, erant tantum in manibus clericorum, priora per sæcula.—*Dissertat. in Tertul.* 1. § 10. note 57.

† Cum animadvertisset Gregorius quod ob corporeas delectationes et voluptates, simplex et imperitum vulgus in simulacrorum cultus errore permaneret—permisit eis, ut in memoriam et recordationem sanctorum martyrum sese oblectarent, et in lætitiā effunderentur, quod successu temporis aliquando futurum esset, ut sua sponte, ad honestiorem et accuratiorem vitæ rationem, transirent."

‡ The head of the Jupiter Olympius of Phidias, carved in the mahogany transept, officiates at this day, as *locum tenens* for God Almighty, in the chapel of King's College, Cambridge.

Among the sacred writings which the church has seen fit to deem apochryphal, there was a book attributed to Christ himself, in which he declares that he was in no way against the heathen gods.—*Jones on the Canon*, vol. I. p. 11. Origen vindicates, without denying the charge of Celsus, “that the Christian Religion contained nothing but what Christians held in common with heathens: nothing that was new, or truly great.”—*Bellamy's Translation*, chap. 4.

37. Even under the primitive discipline, and before the conversion of Rome, while the church was cautious of admitting into her worship any thing that had a relation to the old idolatry: yet even in this period, Gregory Thaumaturgus, is commended by his namesake of Nyssa, for changing the Pagan festivals into Christian holidays, the better to draw the heathens to the religion of Christ.*

38. Thus Paulinus, a convert from Paganism, of senatorian rank, celebrated for his parts and learning, and who became *Bishop of Nola*, apologizes for setting up certain paintings in his episcopal church, dedicated to Felix the Martyr, “that it was done with a design to draw the rude multitude, habituated to the profane rites of Paganism, to a knowledge and good opinion of the Christian doctrine, by learning from these pictures, what they were not capable of learning from books; i. e. the Lives and Acts of Christian Saints.”—See *Works of Paulinus*, B. 9.

39. Pope Gregory, called the Great, about two centuries later, makes the same apology for *images* or *pictures*, in churches; declaring them to have been introduced for the sake of *the Pagans*; that those who did not know, and could not read the Scriptures, might learn from those images and pictures what they ought to worship.†

40. Paulinus declares the object of these images and pictures to have been, “to draw the heathens the more easily to the faith of Christ, since by flocking in crowds to gaze at the finery of these paintings, and by explaining to each other the stories there represented, they would gradually acquire a reverence for that religion, which inspired so much virtue and piety into its professors.”

* Nyssen, in *Vita Greg. Thaum.* cit. Middleton, *Letter from Rome*, 236. The good nature of Gregory is the more commendable, inasmuch as it was a grateful return of the like degree of indulgence as had been shown to himself. He was *taken in* to the Christian ministry, and consecrated a bishop of Christ, and wrought miracles, even while he continued a Pagan, and was entirely ignorant of the Christian doctrine.

† *Epist.* l. 9, c. 9.

41. But these compliances, as *Bishop Stillingfleet* observes, were attended with very bad consequences ; since *Christianity became at last, by that means, to be nothing else but reformed Paganism, as to its divine worship.**

42. The learned Christian advocate, M. Turretin, in describing the state of Christianity in the fourth century, has a well turned rhetoricism, the point of which is, "that it was not so much the empire that was brought over to the faith, as the faith that was brought over to the empire: not the Pagans who were converted to Christianity, but Christianity that was converted to Paganism."†

43. "From this era, then, according to the accounts of all writers, though Christianity became the public and established religion of the government, yet it was forced to sustain a perpetual struggle for many ages, against the obstinate efforts of *Paganism*, which was openly espoused by some of the emperors; publicly tolerated and privately favoured by others; and connived at in some degree by all."—*Middleton's Letters from Rome.*

44. Within thirty years after Constantine, the emperor Julian entirely restored Paganism, and abrogated all the laws which had been made against it. Though it is utterly untrue that he was ever guilty of any act of persecution or intolerance towards Christians.‡ The three emperors, who next in order succeeded Julian, i. e. *Jovian, Valentinian, Valens*; though they were Christians by profession, were yet wholly indifferent and neutral between the two religions; granting an equal indulgence and toleration to them both. So that they may be as fairly claimed to be Pagan as Christian emperors. Nor had even Constantine himself, the first for whom the designation of a Christian emperor has been challenged, accepted the rite of Christian baptism before he was dying, or ever in his life ceased to be, and to officiate, as a priest of the gods.

Gratian, the seventh emperor from him, and fourth after Julian, though a sincere believer, never thought fit to annul what Julian had restored. He was the first however

* See *Bishop Stillingfleet's Defence* of the charge of Idolatry against the Romanists, vol. 5 of his Works, p. 459, where the reader will find the charge demonstrably proved against the church of Rome.

† "Non imperio ad fidem adducto, sed et imperii pompa ecclesiam inficiente. Non ethnicis ad Christum conversis, sed et Christi religione ad Ethnicæ formam depravata."—Orat. Academ. De Variis Christ. Rel. fatis.

‡ See vindication of his character, in the *Lion*, vol. 1, No. 18. 12th Letter from Oakham.

of the emperors who refused the title and habit of the Pontifex Maximus, as incompatible with the Christian character. So that till then, up to the year 384, there was no actual disunion between Christ and Belial; no evidence of miracles or strength of reason had been offered to attest the superiority of the Christian religion, to demonstrate that there was any material distinction between that and Paganism, or to determine the mind of any one of the Roman emperors, that there was an inconsistency in being a Christian and a Pagan at the same time.

45. The affront put by Gratian upon the Pagan priesthood, in refusing to wear their pontifical robe, was so highly resented, that one of them is recorded to have said, *since the emperor refuses to be our Pontifex Maximus, we will very shortly take care that our Pontifex shall be Maximus.*

46. In the subsequent reign of Theodosius, whose laws were generally severe upon the Pagans, Symmachus, the governor of Rome, presented a memorial in the strongest terms, and in the name of the Senate and people of Rome, for leave to replace the altar of victory in the senate house, whence it had been removed by Gratian. This memorial was answered by St. Ambrose, who in a letter upon it to the emperor, observes, that, "when the petitioners had so many temples and altars of their own, in all the streets of Rome, where they might freely offer their sacrifices, it seemed to be a mere insult on Christianity, to demand still one altar more; and especially in the senate house, where the greater part were then Christians." This petition was rejected by Valentinian, against the advice of all his council, but was granted presently after by the Christian emperor, Eugenius, who murdered and succeeded him.

Thus entering on the fifth century, and further surely we need not descend: we have the surest and most unequivocal demonstration, that Christianity, as a religion distinct from the ancient Paganism, up to that time, had gained no extensive footing in the world. After that period, all that there was of religion in the world, merges in the palpable obscure of the dark ages. The pretence to an argument for the Christian religion, from any thing either miraculous or extraordinary in its propagation, is therefore, a sheer defiance of all evidence and reason whatever.

47. "Pantænus, the head of the Alexandrian school, was probably the first who enriched the church with a

version of the sacred writings, which has been lost among the ruins of time.—*Mosh.* vol. I. 186.—*Compare with No. 34 in this Chapter.*

48. “They all, (i. e. all the fathers of the second century) attributed a *double sense* to the words of Scripture, the one obvious and literal, the other hidden and mysterious, which lay concealed, as it were, under the veil of the outward letter. The former they treated with the utmost neglect,” &c.—*Ibid.* 186.

49. “God also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”—2 Corinth. iii. 6.

50. “It is here to be attentively observed (says Moshheim, speaking of the church in the second century) that the form used in the exclusion of heinous offenders from the society of Christians, was, at first, extremely simple; but was, however, imperceptibly altered, enlarged by an addition of a vast multitude of rites, and new-modelled according to the discipline used in the ancient mysteries.”—*Mosh.* vol. I. p. 199.

51. “The profound respect that was paid to the Greek and Roman *mysteries*, and the extraordinary sanctity that was attributed to them, induced the Christians, (of the second century) to give their religion a *mystic air*, in order to put it upon an equal footing, in point of dignity, with that of the Pagans. For this purpose, they gave the name of *mysteries* to the institutions of the gospel, and decorated, particularly the holy sacrament, with that solemn title. They used, in that sacred institution, as also in that of baptism, several of the *terme* employed in the heathen *mysteries*, and proceeded so far at length, as even to adopt some of the rites and ceremonies of which those renowned mysteries consisted.”—*Ibid.* 204.

52. “It may be further observed, that the custom of teaching their religious doctrines, by images, actions, signs, and other sensible representations, which prevailed among the Egyptians, and indeed in almost all the eastern nations, was another cause of the increase of external rites in the church.”—*Ibid.* 204.

53. “Among the human means that contributed to multiply the number of Christians, and extend the limits of the church in the third century, we shall find a great variety of causes uniting their influence, and contributing jointly to this happy purpose. Among these must be reckoned the zeal and labours of Origen, and the different

well expressed in its motto, *that philosophy which is agreeable to nature, approve and cherish; but that which pretends to commerce with the deity, avoid!* pledges us to view all references to supernatural agency, as being no proof of such agency, but as demonstration absolute of the idiotish stupidity, or arrant knavery of the party, resting any cause whatever on such references. It is not in the former of these predicaments, that such an historian as Mosheim, can be impeached; nor could either the emoluments or dignities of the theological chair at Helmstadt, or the chancellorship of the University of Gottingen, allay the smartings of sentiment, and the anguish of conscious meanness, in holding them at so dear a price, as the necessity of making such statements, of thus selling his name to the secret scorn of all whose praise was worth ambition, thus outraging his own convictions, thus conflicting with his own statements; thus bowing down his stupendous strength of talent, to harmonize with the figments of drivelling idiotcy, making learning do homage to ignorance, and the clarion that should have roused the sleeping world, pipe down to concert with the rattle-trap and Jew's-harp of the nursery.

Of the pious frauds, which this historian admits to share only a small part of the honour of contributing to the propagation of the gospel, because they were "practised by so few;" he had not the alleviation to his feelings, of being able to be ignorant that he had falsified that statement in innumerable passages of this and his other writings; and that his whole history of the church, from first to last, contains not so much as a single instance, of one of the fathers of the church, or first preachers of the gospel, who did *not* practice those pious frauds.

57. "The authors who have treated of the innocence and sanctity of the primitive Christians, have fallen into the error of supposing them to have been unspotted models of piety and virtue, and a gross error indeed it is, as the strongest testimonies too evidently prove."—*Ibid.* p. 120.

58.* "Such was the license of inventing, so headlong the readiness of believing, in the first ages, that the credibility of transactions derived from thence, must have been hugely doubtful: nor has the world only, but the

* "Tanta fuit primis sæculis fingendi licentia, tam prona in credendo facilitas, ut rerum gestarum fides exinde graviter laboraverat. Neque enim orbis terrarum tantum, sed et Dei ecclesia de temporibus suis mysticis merito queratur."—Fell, Bishop of Oxford, quoted by Lardner and Tindal.

church of God also, has reasonably to complain of its mystical times."—*Bishop Fell, so rendered in the Author's SYNTAGMA*, p. 34.

59. "The extravagant notions which obtained among the Christians of the primitive ages, (says Dupin) sprang from the opinions of the Pagan philosophers, and from the mysteries, which crack-brained men put on the history of the Old and New-Testament, according to their imaginations. The more extraordinary these opinions were, the more did they relish, and the better did they like them; and those who invented them, published them gravely, as great mysteries to the simple, who were all disposed to receive them."—*Dupin's Short History of the Church*, vol. 2. c. 4, as quoted by Tindal, p. 224.

60. "They have but little knowledge of the Jewish nation, and of the *primitive* Christians, who obstinately refuse to believe that such sort of notions could not proceed from thence; for on the contrary, it was their very character to turn the whole scripture into allegory."—*Archbishop Wake's Life of the apostle Barnabas*, p. 73.

Of the MIRACULOUS POWERS with which Mosheim* would persuade us that the Christians of the third century were still endowed; we have but to confront him with his own conflicting statement, on the 11th page of his second volume: concluding with his own reflection on that admission:—"Thus does it generally happen in human life, that when danger attends the discovery and the profession of the truth, the prudent are silent, the multitude believe, and impostors triumph."

Of the DREAMS AND VISIONS, of which he speaks; it is enough to answer him with the intuitive demonstration, that such sort of evidence for Christianity, might be as easily pretended for one religion as another; it is such as none but a desperate cause would appeal to, such as no rational man would respect, and no honest man maintain; not only of no nature to afford proof to the claims of a divine revelation, but itself unproved; and not alone unproved; but of its own nature, both morally and physically, incapable of receiving any sort of proof. The heart smarts for the degradation of outraged reason, for the humiliation of torn and lacerated humanity; that a Mosheim should talk of dreams and visions—that it should come to this! O Christianity, how great are thy triumphs!

* Vol. I, p. 247.

Of the HEALING OF DISEASES, by the invoking of a name. It is impossible not to see, that this author did not believe his own argument : because it is impossible not to know that no man in his senses *could* believe it, and impossible not to suspect, that so weak and foolish an argument, was by this author, purposely exhibited as one of the main pillars of the Christian evidence, in order to betray to future times, how weak that evidence was, and to encourage those who should come to live in some happier day when the choused world might better endure the being undeceived ;—to blow it down with their breath. Beausobre, Tillotson, South, Watson, Paley, and some high in the church, yet living, have given more than pregnant inuendoes of their acting on this policy.

Nothing is more obvious, than that persons diseased in body, must labour under a corresponding weakness of mind. There is no delusion of such obvious practicability on a weak mind in a diseased body ; as that which should hold out hopes of cure, beyond the promise of nature. A miracle of healing, is therefore of all miracles, in its own nature most suspicious, and least capable of evidence.

It was the pretence to these *gifts of healing*, that gave name to the *Therapeutæ*, or Healers ; and consequently supplies us with an infallible clue to lead to the birth-place and cradle of Christianity. The cure being performed by *invocation of a name*, still lights us on to the germ and nucleus of the whole system. Neither slight nor few are the indications of this magical or supposed *charming* operation of the *Brutum fulmen* ; the mere name only of the words, *Jesus Christ*, in the New Testament itself ; and consequently neither weak nor inconsecutive are our reasons, for maintaining that it was in the name, and *the name only*, that the first preachers of Christianity believed ; that it was not supposed by them to be the designation of any person who had really existed, but was a *vox et præterea nihil*,—a charm more powerful than the *Abraxas*, more sacred than *Abracadabra* ; in short, *those* were but the spells that bound the services of inferior demons—*this*, conjured the assistance of omnipotence, and was indeed, the God's spell. “ *There is none other NAME under heaven,* (says the Peter of the Acts of the Apostles) *given among men, whereby we must be saved.*”—Chap. iv. 12.

61. Origen, ever the main strength and sheet-anchor of the advocates of Christianity, expressly maintains, that

“the miraculous powers which the Christians possessed, were not in the least owing to enchantments, (which he makes Celsus seem to have objected,) but to their pronouncing the name I. E. S. U. S,* and making mention of some remarkable occurrences of his life. Nay, the name of I. E. S. U. S, has had such power over demons, that it has sometimes proved effectual, though pronounced by very wicked persons.”—*Answer to Celsus*, chap. 6.

62. “And the name of I. E. S. U. S, at this very day, composes the ruffled minds of men, dispossesses demons, cures diseases; and works a meek, gentle, and amiable temper in all those persons, who make profession of Christianity, from a higher end than their worldly interests.”—*Ibid.* 57. So says Origen. No Christian will for a moment think that there is any salving of the matter in such a statement. Friar’s balsam was found in every case without fail; to heal the wound, even after a man’s head was clean cut off, provided his head were set on again the right way.

63. “When men pretend to work miracles, and talk of immediate revelations, of knowing the truth by revelation, and of more than ordinary illumination; we ought not to be frightened by those big words, from looking what is under them; nor to be afraid of calling those things into question, which we see set off with such high-flown pretences. It is somewhat strange that we should believe men the more, for that very reason, upon which we should believe them the less.—*Clagit’s Persuasive to an Ingenuous Trial of Opinions*, p. 19, as quoted by Tindal, p. 217.

64. St. Chrysostom declares, “that miracles are only proper to excite sluggish and vulgar minds, that men of sense have no occasion for them, and that they frequently carry some untoward suspicion along with them.”—Quoted in *Middleton’s Prefatory Discourse to his Letter from Rome*, p. 104.

In this sentiment it must be owned, that the Christian saint strikingly coincides with the Pagan philosopher Polybius, who considered all miracles as fables, invented to preserve in the vulgar a due sense of respect for the deity.”—*Reimmann, Hist. Ath.* p. 233.

65. The great theologian, Beausobre, in his immense *Histoire de Manichee*, tom. 2, p. 568, says,† “We see in

* See similar mystical senses of the epithets, Christ and Chrest, under the articles Serapis, and Adrian’s Letter.

† “On voit dans l’histoire que j’ai rapportée, une sorte d’hypocrisie, qui n’a

the history which I have related, a sort of hypocrisy, that has been perhaps, but too common at all times: that churchmen not only do *not* say what they think, but they *do* say, the direct contrary of what they think. Philosophers in their cabinets; out of them, they are content with fables, though they well know that they are fables. Nay more: they deliver honest men to the executioner, for having uttered what they themselves know to be true. How many Atheists and Pagans have burned holy men under the pretext of heresy? Every day do hypocrites consecrate, and make people adore the host, though as well convinced as I am, that it is nothing but a bit of bread.

66. The learned Grotius has a similar avowal: "He that reads ecclesiastical history, reads nothing but the roguery and folly of bishops and churchmen."—*Grotii Epist.* 22.

No man could quote higher authorities.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE ESSENES OR THERAPEUTS.

A KNOWLEDGE of the character and tenets of that most remarkable set of men that ever existed, who were known by the name of Essenes or Therapeuts, is absolutely necessary to a fair investigation of the claims of the New Testament, in the origination and references of which, they bear so prominent a part.

The celebrated German critic, Michaelis, whose great work, the *Introduction to the New Testament*, has been translated by Dr. Herbert Marsh, the present Lord Bishop of Peterborough, defines them as "a Jewish sect, which began to spread itself at Ephesus, and to threaten great mischief to Christianity, in the time (or, indeed, previous to the time) of St. Paul; on which account, in his epistles to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, and to Timothy; he declares himself openly against them."†

peut-etre ete que trop commune dans tous les tems. C'est que des ecclesiastiques, non seulement ne disent pas ce qu'ils pensent, mais disent tout le contraire de ce qu'ils pensent. Philosophes dans leur cabinet, hors dela, ils content des fables, quoiqu'ils sachent bien que ce sont des fables. Ils font plus; ils livrent au bourreau des gens de biens pour l'avoir dit. Combien d'athees et de prophanes ont fait bruler de saints personnages, sous pretexte d'heresie! Tous les jours des hypocrites, consacrent et font adorer l'hostie, bien qu'ils soient aussi convaincus que moi, que ce n'est qu'un morceau de pain."—*Ibid.*

† Michaelis, vol. 4, p. 79.

But surely this admission of the sect's beginning to spread itself at Ephesus, and its existence at Colosse, and in the diocese of Timothy, to a sufficient extent to call for the serious opposition of one who, in any calculations of chronology, must have been the contemporary of Jesus Christ; is no disparagement of the fact of its previous establishment in Egypt; while the admitted fact,* that these three Epistles of St. Paul, in which he so earnestly opposes himself to this sect, were written *before* any one of our four Gospels, involves the *a fortiori* demonstration; that their tenets and discipline, whatever they were, were not corruptions or perversions of those gospels, however those gospels may turn out to be improvements or plagiarisms upon the previously established tenets and discipline of that sect.

The ancient writers who have given any account of this sect, are Philo, Josephus, Pliny, and Solinus. Infinite perplexity, however, is occasioned by modern historians attempting to describe differences and distinctions where there are really none. The *Therapeutæ* and the *Essenes* are one and the same sect: the *Therapeutæ*, which is Greek, being nothing more than *Essenes*, which is of the same sense in Egyptian, and is in fact a translation of it:—as, perhaps, *Surgeons, Healers, Curates*, or the most vulgar sense of *Doctors*, is the nearest possible plain English of THERAPEUTÆ.* The similarity of the sentiments of the Essenes, or Therapeutæ, to those of the church of Rome, induced the learned Jesuit, Nicolaus Serarius, to seek for them an honourable origin. He contended, therefore, that they were Asideans, and derived them from the Rechabites, described so circumstantially in the 35th chapter of Jeremiah; at the same time, he asserted that the first Christian monks were Essenes.

Both of these positions were denied by his opponents, Drusius and Scaliger; but in respect to the latter, says Michaelis, certainly Serarius was in the right.

“The Essenes,” he adds, “were indeed a Jewish, and not a Christian sect.” Why, to be sure, it would be awkward enough for a Christian divine to admit them to the honours of that name before “that religion which St. Augustine tells us ‘was before in the world,’ began to be called Christian.” (See Admission 12.) *The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch* (Acts). But sure, it was something more than the name that made them such; they

* It is admitted by Dr. Lardner.

were none the less what the name signified, ere yet it was conferred on them : and the Essenes had every thing but the name."

"It is evident," continues Michaelis, "from the above-mentioned epistles of St. Paul, that to the great mortification of the apostle, they insinuated themselves very early into the Christian church."

But is it not, in reason, as likely that the Christians, who were certainly *the last comers*, should have insinuated themselves into the Therapeutan community?

Eusebius has fully shown that the monastic life was derived from the Essenes ; and, because many Christians adopted the manners of the Essenes, Epiphanius took the Essenes in general for Christians, and confounded them with the Nazarenes :—a confusion to which the similarity of this name, to that of the Nazarites of the Old Testament, might in some measure contribute. But we find this confusion still worse confounded, in the remarkable oversight of the passage, Matthew ii. 23, which betrays that Jesus himself was believed to be one of this fraternity of monks.*

Montfaucon and Helyot have attempted to prove them Christians, but have been confuted by Bouhier. Lange has contended that they were nothing more than circumcised *Egyptians*, but has been confuted by Henmann.—*Marsh's Michaelis*, vol. 4, p. 79, 80, 81.

"It was in Egypt," says the great ecclesiastical historian, Mosheim, "that the morose discipline of Asceticism † (*i. e.* the Essenian or Therapeutan discipline) took its rise; and it is observable, that that country has in all times, as it were by an immutable law or disposition of nature, abounded with persons of a melancholy complexion, and produced, in proportion to its extent, more gloomy spirits than any other parts of the world. It was here that the Essenes dwelt principally, long before the coming of Christ.—*Mosheim*, vol. 1, p. 196.

* Matthew ii. 23. "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene ;" that is (as we see from Epiphanius), a *Therapeut*. It is certain that none of the Jewish prophets had so said. Some other equally sacred writings are referred to. Though their accomplishment by the mere resemblance of the name of the city in which Jesus is said to have resided, to that of the order of monks to which he was believed to have belonged, is a most miserable pun. The Jews, however, who think it reasonable to admit that such a person as Jesus really existed, place his birth near a century sooner than the generally assumed epocha.—*Basnage Histoire des Juifs*, l. 5, c. 14, 15.

† From the Greek *ασκησις*, *exercise, discipline, study, meditation*, signifying also *self-mortification*.

It is not the first glance, nor a cursory observance, that will sufficiently admonish the reader of the immense historical wealth put into his hand, by this *stupendous admission*, this surrender of the key-stone of the mighty arch,—this giving-up of every thing that can be pretended for the evidences of the Christian religion.

This admission of the great ecclesiastical historian (than whom there is no greater), will serve us as the Pythagorean theorem—the great geometrical element of all subsequent science, of continual recurrence, of infinite application—ever to be borne in mind, always to be brought in proof—presenting the means of solving every difficulty, and the clue for guiding us to every truth. “Bind it about thy neck, write it upon the tablet of thy heart”—**EVERY THING OF CHRISTIANITY IS OF EGYPTIAN ORIGIN.**

The first and greatest library that ever was in the world, was at Alexandria in Egypt. The first of that most mischievous of all institutions—universities, was the University of Alexandria in Egypt; where lazy monks and wily fanatics first found the benefit of clubbing together, to keep the privileges and advantages of learning to themselves, and concocting holy mysteries and inspired legends, to be dealt out as the craft should need, for the perpetuation of ignorance and superstition, and consequently of the ascendancy of jugglers and jesuits, holy hypocrites, and reverend rogues, among men.

All the most valued manuscripts of the Christian scriptures are *Codices Alexandrini*. The very first bishops of whom we have any account, were bishops of *Alexandria*. Scarcely one of the more eminent fathers of the Christian church is there, who had not been educated and trained in the arts of priestly fraud, in the University of *Alexandria*,—that great sewer of the congregated feculencies of fanaticism.

In those early times, the professions of Medicine and Divinity were inseparable. We read of the divinity students studying medicine in the School, or University of Alexandria, to which all persons resorted, who were afterwards to practice in either way, on the weak in body or the weak in mind, among their fellow creatures. The *Therapeuts*, or Essenes, as their name signifies, were expressly professors of the *art of healing*—an art in those days necessarily conferring the most mystical sanctity of character on all who were endued with it, and the most convenient of all others for the purposes of imposture and

wonderment. It was invariably considered to be attainable only by the especial gift of heaven,* and no cure of any sort, or in any way effected, was ever ascribed to natural causes merely. Those who, after due training in the ascetic discipline, were sent out from the university of Alexandria to practice their divinely acquired art in the towns and villages, were recognized as regular or canonical *apostles* : while those who had not obtained their credentials from the college, who set up for themselves, or who, after having left the college, ceased to recognise its appointment, were called *false apostles*, quacks, heretics, and empirics. And in several of the early apocryphal scriptures, we find the titles *Apostolici* and *Apotactici* (apostolical, and apotactical, i. e. of the monkish order of Apotactites, or Solitaires,) perfectly synonymous. Eusebius emphatically calls the apotactical Therapeuts *apostolical*. “Philo (he says) wrote also a treatise on *the contemplative life, or the Worshippers* ; from whence, we have borrowed those things, which we allege concerning the manner of life of those apostolical men.”† Indeed, Christ himself, is represented as describing his apostles as members of this solitary order of monks, and being one himself :—“*They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*”—John xvii. 16. What then but monks ? The seceders or dissenters (and of this class was St. Paul),‡ upon finding the advantage of setting up in the trade upon their own independent foundation, pleaded their success in miracles of healing, as evidence of their divine commission ; and abundantly returned the revilings of the Therapeutan college.

Unaided by the lights of anatomy, and unfounded on any principles of rational science ; recovery from disease could only be ascribed to supernatural powers. A fever was supposed to be a dæmon that had taken up his abode in the body of the unfortunate patient, and was to be expelled, not by any virtue of material causes ; but by incantations, spells, and *leucomancy*, or white magic ; as opposed to *necromancy*, or black magic, by which diseases and evils of all sorts were believed to be incurred. The *white magic* consisted of prayers, fastings,§ baptisms,

* “To another the gifts of healing, by the same Spirit. Have all the gifts of healing ?” 1 Cor. xii.—Query. How did he spend three years in Arabia, but in a course of study for the ministry ?

† Ο (λογος) περι της θεωρητικής, η ικετων, &c. τα περι της των αποστολικων ανδρων διεληλυθαι.—*Eccl. Hist.* lib. 2, c. 17, A. ‡ Galat. i. 17.

§ “Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.” Matt. xviii. 21.

sacraments, &c. which were believed to have the same power over good dæmons, and even over God himself, as the black magic had over evil dæmons and their supreme head, the Devil. The trembling patient was only entitled to expect his cure in proportion to his faith, to believe without understanding, and to surrender his fortune and life itself to the purposes of his physician, and to the business of imposing upon others, the deceits that had been practised upon himself.

Even to this day, the name retained by our sacred writings, is derived from the belief of their magical influence, as a spell or charm of God, to drive away diseases. The Irish peasantry still continue to tie passages of St. John's Spell, or St. John's God's-spell, to the horns of cows to make them give more milk; nor would any powers of rational argument shake their conviction of the efficacy of a bit of *the word*, tied round a colt's heels, to prevent them from swelling.

It will become physicians of higher claims to science and rationality, to triumph over the veterinary piety of the Bog of Allen, when their own forms of prescription shall no longer betray the wish to conceal from the patient the nature of the ingredients to which he is to trust his life, nor bear, as the first mark of the pen upon the paper, the mystical hieroglyphic of *Jupiter*, the talismanic R, under whose influence the prescribed herbs were to be gathered, and from whose miraculous agency their operation was to be expected.

The Therapeutæ of Egypt, from whom are descended the vagrant hordes of Jews and Gypsies, had well found by what arts mankind were to be cajoled; and as they boasted their acquaintance with the sanative qualities of herbs of all countries; so in their extensive peregrinations through all the then known regions of the earth, they had not failed to bring home, and remodel to their own purposes, those sacred spells or religious romances, which they found had been successfully palmed on the credulity of remote nations. Hence the Indian *Chrishna* might have become the Therapeutan head of the order of spiritual physicians.

No principle was held more sacred than that of the necessity of keeping the sacred writings from the knowledge of the people. Nothing could be safer from the danger of discovery than the substitution, with scarce a change of names, "of the incarnate Deity of the Sanscrit

Romance" for the imaginary founder of the Therapeutan college. What had been said to have been done in India, could be as well said to have been done in Palestine. The change of names and places, and the mixing up of various sketches of the Egyptian, Phœnician, Greek, and Roman mythology, would constitute a sufficient disguise to evade the languid curiosity of infant scepticism. A knowledge within the acquisition only of a few, and which the strongest possible interest bound that few to hold inviolate, would soon pass entirely from the records of human memory. A long continued habit of imposing upon others would in time subdue the minds of the impostors themselves, and cause them to become at length the dupes of their own deception, to forget the temerity in which their first assertions had originated, to catch the infection of the prevailing credulity, and to believe their own lie.

In such, the known and never-changing laws of nature, and the invariable operation of natural causes, we find the solution of every difficulty and perplexity that remoteness of time might throw in the way of our judgment of past events.

But when, to such an apparatus of rational probability, we are enabled to bring in the absolute ratification of unquestionable testimony,—to show that what was in supposition more probable than any thing else that could be supposed, was in fact that which absolutely took place,—we have the highest degree of evidence of which history is capable; we can give no other definition of *historical truth itself*.

The *probability*, then, that that sect of vagrant quack-doctors, the Therapeutæ, who were established in Egypt and its neighbourhood many ages before the period assigned by later theologians as that of the birth of Christ, were the original fabricators of the writings contained in the New Testament; becomes *certainty* on the basis of evidence, than which history hath nothing more certain—by the unguarded, but explicit—unwary, but most unqualified and positive, statement of the historian Eusebius, that "*those ancient Therapeutæ were Christians, and that their ancient writings were our Gospels and Epistles.*"* The wonder with which Lardner quotes this astonishing confession of the great

* The above most important passage of all ecclesiastical records, is in the 2d book, the 17th chapter, and 53d and following pages of his History. The title of a whole chapter (the fourth of the first book) of this work is, **THAT THE RELIGION PUBLISHED BY JESUS CHRIST TO ALL NATIONS IS NEITHER NEW NOR STRANGE.**

pillar of the pretended evidences of the Christian religion,* only shows how aware he was of the fatal inferences with which it teems.

It is most essentially observable, that the Essenes or Therapeuts, in addition to their monopoly of the art of healing, professed themselves to be *Eclectics*; they held Plato in the highest esteem, though they made no scruple to join with his doctrines, whatever they thought conformable to reason in the tenets and opinions of the other philosophers.

“These sages were of opinion that *true philosophy*,† the greatest and most salutary gift of God to mortals, was scattered, in various portions, through all the different sects; and that it was, consequently, the duty of every wise man to gather it from the several corners where it lay dispersed, and to employ it, thus re-united, in destroying the dominion of impiety and vice.”‡ The principal seat of this philosophy was at *Alexandria*; and “it manifestly appears,” says Mosheim,§ “from the testimony of Philo the Jew, who was himself one of this sect, that this (Eclectic) philosophy (of this Essenian or Therapeutan sect) was in a flourishing state at *Alexandria* when our Saviour was upon earth.”—*Eccl. Hist. Cent. 1, p. 1.*

1. We have only to collate the admission of the orthodox Lactantius, that Christianity itself *was* the *Eclectic Philosophy*, inasmuch as that “if there had been any one to have collected the truth that was scattered and diffused among the various sects of philosophers and divines into one, and to have reduced it into a system, there would indeed be no difference between him and a Christian:”||

2. To compare the various tenets and speculations of the different philosophers and religionists of antiquity with the strong and particular smatch of the Platonic philosophy, which we actually see pervading the New Testament: and to add the weight in all reason and fairness due to the positive testimony of that unquestionably learned and intelligent Manichæan Christian and bishop, Faustus,—that “it is an undoubted fact, that the New Testament was not written by Christ himself, nor by his

* Credibility, vol. 2, 4to. p. 361.

† Observe well, the phrases,—“*the philosophy—our philosophy*,” and the “*true philosophy*,” occur throughout the Fathers, in a hundred passages for one, where “*Christianity*” should have been the word.

‡ Mosheim, vol. i. p. 169.

§ Ibid. p. 37.

|| Admission No. 10 in the chapter of Admissions.

apostles, but a long while after their time, by some unknown persons, who, lest they should not be credited when they wrote of affairs they were little acquainted with, affixed to their works the names of apostles, or of such as were supposed to have been their companions, and then said that they were written *according* to them.”—*Faust.* lib. 2.

To this important passage, of which I reserve the original text for my next occasion of quoting it,* I here subjoin what the same high authority objects, if possibly with still increasing emphasis, against the arguments of St. Augustine :†—“For many things have been inserted by your ancestors in the speeches of our Lord, which, though put forth under his name, agree not with his faith; especially since,—as already it has been often proved by us,—that these things were not written by Christ, nor his apostles, but a long while after their assumption, by I know not what sort of HALF-JEWS, not even agreeing with themselves, who made up their tale out of reports and opinions merely; and yet, fathering the whole upon the names of the apostles of the Lord, or on those who were supposed to have followed the apostles; they mendaciously pretended that they had written their lies and conceits, *according* to them.” The conclusion is irresistible.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES, DOCTRINES, DISCIPLINE, AND ECCLESIASTICAL POLITY, LONG ANTERIOR TO THE PERIOD ASSIGNED AS THAT OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

FROM the more general account of that remarkable sect of philosophical religionists, the Egyptian Therapeuts, which we have collected from the admissions of the most

* In chapter 15. .

† “Multa enim a majoribus vestris, eloquiis Domini nostri inserta verba sunt; quæ nomine signata ipsius, cum ejus fide non congruant, præsertim, quia, ut jam sæpe probatum a nobis est, nec ab ipso hæc sunt, nec ab ejus apostolis scripta, sed multo post eorum assumptionem, a nescio quibus, et ipsis inter se non concordantibus SEMI-JUDÆIS, per famas opinionesque comperta sunt; qui tamen omnia eadem in apostolorum Domini conferentes nomina, vel eorum qui secuti apostolos viderentur, errores ac mendacia sua *secundum* eos se scripsisse mentiti sunt.”—*Faust.* lib. 33, c. 2.

strenuous defenders of the evidences of the Christian religion ; we pass into the more immediate sanctuary of the sect itself, to learn from the unquestionable authority of one who was a member of their community, all that can now be known of what their scriptures, doctrines, discipline, and ecclesiastical polity, were.

On the threshold of this avenue, we only pause to recapitulate for the reader's admonition, the certainties of information already established ; which, carrying with him through the important discoveries to which we now approach, he shall with the quicker apprehension discern, and with the easier method weigh and appreciate the value of the further information to which now we tend.

1. The Essenes, the Therapeuts, the Ascetics, the Monks, the Ecclesiastics, and the Eclectics, are but different names for one and the self-same sect.

2. The word *Essene* is nothing more than the *Egyptian* word for that of which *Therapeut* is the *Greek*, each of them signifying *healer* or *doctor*, and designating the character of the sect as professing to be endued with the miraculous gift of healing ; and more especially so with respect to the diseases of the mind.

3. Their name of *Ascetics* indicated the severe discipline and exercise of self-mortification, long fastings, prayers, contemplation, and even making of themselves *eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake*,* as did Origen, Melito, and others, who derived their Christianity from the same school ; and as Christ himself is represented to have recognised and approved their practice.

4. Their name of *Monks* indicated their delight in solitude, their *contemplative* life, and their entire segregation and abstraction from the world : which Christ, in the Gospel, is in like manner represented, as describing as characteristic of the community of which he himself was a member.†

5. Their name of *Ecclesiastics* was of the same sense, and indicated their being *called out*, elected, separated from the general fraternity of mankind, and set apart to the more immediate service and honour of God.

6. Their name of *Eclectics* indicated that their *divine*

* "And there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." Matt. xix. 12.

† "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." John xvii. 16. "I pray for them, I pray not for the world." Ibid. 9. Surely, the world ought to be much obliged to him !

philosophy was a collection of all the diverging rays of truth which were scattered through the various systems of Pagan and Jewish piety, into one bright focus—that their religion was made up of “*whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report—if there were any virtue, and if there were any praise,*” (Phil. iv. 8,) wherever found; alike indifferent, whether it were derived from “*saint, from savage, or from sage—Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.*”

7. They had a flourishing university, or corporate body, established upon these principles at Alexandria in Egypt, long before the period assigned to the birth of Christ.

8. From this body they sent out missionaries, and had established colonies, auxiliary branches, and affiliated communities, in various cities of Asia Minor; which colonies were in a flourishing condition, *before* the preaching of St. Paul.

9. Eusebius, from whom all our knowledge of ecclesiastical antiquity is derived, declares his opinion, that “the sacred writings used by this sect, were none other than our Gospels, and the writings of the apostles; and that certain *DIEGESES*, after the manner of allegorical interpretations of the ancient prophets; these were their epistles.”*

10. It is certain, that the Epistles and Gospels, and the whole system of Christianity, as conveyed to us upon the credit of the fathers; do at this day bear the character of being such an *Eclectic* epitome or selection from all the forms of religion and philosophy then known in the world, as these Eclectic philosophers professed to have formed.

11. It is certain that our three first Gospels were not written by the persons whose names they bear, but are derived from an earlier draft of the evangelical story, which was entitled the *DIEGESIS*.

With these lights in thy hand, enter reader, on the stupendous vista that I unlock for thee, by the best translation I could make, and better than any that I could find ready-made, of the most important historical document in the whole world: whichever be the second in importance.

* Ταχα δ' εικός α φησιν αρχαιων παρ αυτοις ειναι συγγραμματα, ευαγγελια, και τας των αποστολων γραφας, ΛΙΗΓΗΣΕΙΣ τε τινας κατα το εικος των παλαι προφητων ερμηνευτικας—επιστολαι, ταυτα ειναι.—Euseb. Ec. His. lib. 2, c. 16. fol. ed. Coloniae Allobrogum, 1612, p. 60, ad literam D, linea 6.

The Sixteenth Chapter of the Second Book of the Ecclesiastical History, of Eusebius Pamphilus.

“St. Mark, the Evangelist, is said first to have been sent into Egypt, and to have preached there the same gospel which he afterwards committed to writing. There he established the churches of *Alexandria*; and so great was the number of both men and women that became believers upon his first address, on account of the more philosophical and intense Asceticism, (which he both taught and practised,) that Philo has seen fit to write a history of their manner of living, their assemblies, their sacred feasts, and their whole course of life.

1. He so accurately details the manner of living of those who with us have been called *Ascetics*, as to seem not merely the historian of their most remarkable tenets, nor as being acquainted with them merely; but as having embraced them; and both joining their religious rites, and extolling those apostolical men, who, as it is likely, were descended from Hebrews, and who therefore were wont to observe very many of the customs of the ancients, after a more Jewish fashion.

2. In the first place, then, in the discourse which he has written *concerning the contemplative life, or of men of prayer*; having pledged himself to add nothing to his history of a foreign nature, of his own invention, or beyond truth; he mentions that they were called *healers*, or curates, and the women who were among them doctresses, or Therapeutesses; adding the reasons of such a designation, that as a sort of physicians, delivering the souls of those who applied to them from evil passions, they healed and restored them to virtue; or on account of their pure and sincere ministry and religion with respect to the Deity.

3. Whether, therefore, of himself, as writing suitably to their manners, Philo gave them this designation: or whether, indeed, the first of that sect took the name when the appellation of Christians had as yet been nowhere announced, it is by no means necessary to discuss;

4. So at the same time, in his narration, he bears witness to their renunciation of property, in the first instance;

5. And that, as soon as they begin to philosophise, they divest themselves of all revenues of their estates;

6. And then, having laid aside all the anxieties of life; and leaving society, they make their residence in solitary wilds and gardens;

7. "For from the time that they resolved from enthusiasm and the most ardent faith (which indeed was needful), to practice themselves in the emulation of the prophetic life, they were well aware that converse with persons of dissimilar sentiments, would be unprofitable and hurtful :

8. Even as it is related in the accredited Acts of the Apostles,* that all who were known of the apostles (*had imbibed their doctrine*) were wont to sell their possessions and substance, and divided them among all, according as any one had need, so that there was not one among them in want ;

9. For, whoever were owners of estates or houses, as *the word*† says, sold them, and brought the prices of the things sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet, that it might be divided to each as every one had need.

10. Philo relates things exactly similar to these which we have referred to ; bearing witness to their resemblance, even to the letter, saying,

11. For though this race of men are to be found in all parts of the world : nor would it be fitting that either Greece or Barbary should not participate in so perfect a good ; yet they abound in Egypt, in each of the provinces called the Pasturages, and more especially in the neighbourhood of Alexandria ;

12. And the best of men, from all parts of the world, betake themselves to the country of the Therapeutæ, as to a colony, in some most convenient place ; such as is situate near the Lake of Maria,‡ on a small eminence, very opportune both on account of its safety, and the agreeable temperature of the climate.

13. And so, after having described what sort of habitations they occupied, he speaks of *the churches*§ established throughout the country, as follows :

14. In each *parish* there is a sacred edifice which is called the temple, and a *monastery*,|| in which the monks perform the mysteries of the sublime life, taking nothing with them, neither meat nor drink, nor any thing necessary for the wants of the body ; but the laws, the divinely inspired oracles of the prophets, and hymns, and such other things as in which is understanding, and by which true piety is increased and perfected ;

15. And among other things, he says, that their religious exercise occupies the whole time from morn till evening :

* Acts iv.

§ Nota bene.

† Nota bene.

|| Nota bene.

‡ Nota bene

16. "For those who preside over the holy scriptures, philosophise upon them, expounding their literal sense by allegory ;

17. Since they hold that the sense of the spoken meaning is of a hidden nature, indicated in *a double sense*.*

18. They have also the writings of the ancients : and those who were the first leaders of their sect, have left them many records of the sense conveyed in those allegories : using which as a sort of examples, they imitate the manner of *the original doctrine* :†

19. And these things, it seems, are reported by a man who listened to the holy scriptures, as they expounded them ;

20. And, in short, it is very likely that those scriptures of the ancients, of which he speaks, were the Gospels, and the writings of the Apostles ;

21. And that certain *DIEGESES*,‡ as it seems, of the ancient prophets, interpreted ; such as the Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews contains, and many others—these were the Epistles.

22. So, again, he proceeds to write concerning the new Psalms which they make :

23. For they do not confine themselves to contemplation, but they compose canticles and hymns to God, arranged conveniently in every measure, and in the most sublime sorts of metre.

24. And many other things he relates in the discourse of which we treat ;

25. But these it seemed necessary to recount, in which the characteristics of *the ecclesiastical institution*§ are laid down.

26. But if it seem to any one that what has been said is not strictly and essentially meant of the gospel polity, but may be thought to harmonise with other things than those referred to, he may be convinced by the very words of Philo, in order following (so he be but an impartial judge), in which he will receive an unanswerable testimony on this matter ; for thus he writes :

27. And laying down *temperance*|| as a sort of foundation to the soul, they build the other virtues upon it ;

28. 'Neither meat nor drink do any of them take before sun-set,' as considering the business of philosophy worthy of the light, but the necessities of the body only apt for darkness ;

* Nota bene.

† Nota bene.

‡ Nota bene.

§ Nota bene.

|| *Εὐκρατεῖαν*, *continence, temperance, abstinence*, from whence their name *Encratites*, or *Abstainers*.

29. Whence to *this* they assigned the day, but only a small part of the night to *that* ;

30. And some of them think not of nourishment for three days, so much greater is their desire of understanding ;

31. And some so delight themselves and triumph, as banquetted on wisdom, so richly and satisfactorily ministering her doctrine ; as to abstain for a double length of time, and scarce after six days to taste of necessary food in the way of eating !

32. These clear and indisputable remarks of Philo, we consider to be spoken of men *of our religion only*.*

33. But if any one should yet be so hardened as to contradict these things, yet may he be moved from his incredulity, yielding to such cogent evidences as can be found with none, but *only in the religion of Christians according to the Gospel* :†

34. For he mentions, that even women are found among the men of whom we speak, and that many of them are virgins, at an extreme age ; preserving their chastity, not from necessity, like the sacred virgins among the Greeks, but from a voluntary law, from their zeal and desire of wisdom ;

35. With whom studying to live, they have abjured the pleasures of the body, no longer desiring a mortal offspring, but that which is immortal, and which 'tis certain that the soul which loves God can alone beget upon itself.

36. From whence proceeding, he delivers these things still more emphatically :

37. That their expositions of the holy scriptures are, by an under-sense, delivered in allegories ;‡

38. For the whole divine revelation, to these men seems to resemble an animal, and that the words spoken are the body, but the soul is the invisible sense involved in the words : which it is their religion itself which first began to exhibit distinctively, as in a glass; putting the beautiful results of the things understood under the indecencies of the names.

39. What need is there to add to these things, their meetings together, and their residences,—the men in one place, and the women in another ?

40. And the exercises according to the custom this day continued among us, and which, especially upon the festival of our Saviour's passion, we have been accus-

* Nota bene.

† Nota bene.

‡ " Which things are an allegory."—Gal. iv. 24.

tomed to observe, in fastings, in watchings, and in studying the divine discourses ?

41. And which are kept to this day in the same manner *only among us* : as the same author hath shown most manifestly, and delivered in his own writing ;

42. And especially relating the vigils of the great festival, and the exercises in them, and their hymns, which are *the very same as those* used to be said among us ;

43. And how, as one of them sang the psalm in a pleasing voice ; the others leisurely listening, took up the last stanza of the hymns ; and how, on the afore-named days, lying on beds of straw upon the ground, they would taste no wine at all ?

44. As he has in so many words written. Nor would they eat any thing that had blood in it ;* that water only is their drink ; and hyssop, bread, and salt, their food.

45. In addition to these circumstances, he describes the orders of preferment among those of them who aspire to ecclesiastical ministrations,—the offices of the deacons, the humbler rank, and the supreme authority of their bishops.†

46. Whoever wishes a clear understanding of these matters, may acquire it from the afore-mentioned work of this author. “ But that Philo wrote these things with reference to those who were the first preachers of the discipline which is according to the Gospel, and to the manners first handed down from the Apostles, must be manifest to every man.”‡

This conclusion on the whole matter is so strong, that though I am confident a more faithful translation of the whole cannot be made by any man, I recommend a reference to the original, that the scholar may see at once that I have taken no liberty with my author ; and have no occasion to conciliate his favour, or to deprecate his criticism. I offer him my own translation, not on the score of its being mine, but on the score of its being as good as the best that could possibly be made, and better than any that is not the best.

* For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burthen than these necessary things : that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from . . . ; from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well.”—Acts xv. 29.

† “ For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree.”—1 Tim. iii. 13.

‡ Οτι δε τας πρωτας κηρυκας της κατα το ευαγγελιον διδασκαλιας, τα τε αρχηθεν προϊτων αποστρων εδνη παραδεδομενα καταλαβων ο Φιλων ταυτ’εγραφε, παντι τω δμω.—Ibid.

CHAPTER IX.

OF PHILO AND HIS TESTIMONY.

OF Philo, or as he is commonly called, Philo-Judæus—Philo the Jew; whom Eusebius thus largely quotes; it becomes of supreme importance that we should be able to ascertain the age in which he wrote, and who and what he was; since his treatise on “*the Contemperate life*,” or Monastery, is a demonstration, than which history could not possibly have a stronger, that the monastic institution was in full reign at and before his time:

Philo-Judæus was a native of Alexandria, of a priest's family, and brother to the Alabarch, or chief Jewish magistrate in that city. He was sent at the head of an embassy from the Egyptian Jews, to the Emperor Caius Caligula, A. D. 39, and has left an interesting recital of it, usually printed in Josephus. He also wrote a defence of the Jews against Flaccus, then President of Egypt; yet extant. He was eminently versed in the Platonic philosophy, of which both his style and his opinions partake.—His works consist chiefly of allegorical expositions of the Old Testament.

Eusebius places his time in the reign of Caius Claudius, the immediate successor of the Emperor Tiberius, and says of him, that he was a man not only superior to the most of *our own* religion, but by far the most renowned of all the followers of profane knowledge:* and that he was by lineal descent a Hebrew, and not inferior to any in rank at Alexandria; but by following the platonic and Pythagorean philosophy, he surpassed all the learned men of his time.

Eusebius is anxious to have it believed, that Philo was in such sense “*one of us*,” as to have been to all intents and purposes a Christian: and intimates that “it was reported that Philo had met and conversed with St. Peter, at Rome, in the reign of Claudius.”†

But alas, Philo has been insensible, or ungrateful, for the honours with which he was so distinguished, and

* Φίλων γνωρίζετο πλείστοις αληθῶς ὁ μόνον τῶν ἡμετέρων ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐξωθεν ὁρμωμένων παιδείας, ἐπισημοτάτος.—Ecc. Hist. lib. 2, c. 4.

† Οὐ καὶ λόγος ἔχει κατὰ Κλαυδίον ἐπὶ τῆς Ῥώμης εἰς ομιλίαν εἰσεῖν Πέτρον τοῖς ἐκείνῳ τότε κηρυττόντι, καὶ ἅκ' ἀπεικός αὐ εἰη τότε.—Lib. 2 c. 15.

though he has so accurately described the discipline of a religious community, of which he was himself a member : 1. Having parishes, 2. Churches, 3. Bishops, priests, and deacons; 4. Observing the grand festivals of Christianity; 5. Pretending to have had *apostolic* founders; 6. Practising the very manners that distinguished the immediate apostles of Christ; 7. Using scriptures which they believed to be divinely inspired, 8. And which Eusebius himself believed to be none other than the substance of our gospels; 9. And the selfsame allegorical method of interpreting those scriptures, which has since obtained among Christians; 10. And the selfsame manner and order of performing public worship; 11. And having missionary stations or colonies—of their community established in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, and Thessalonica; precisely such, and in such circumstances, as those addressed by St. Paul, in his respective epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians; and 12. Answering to every circumstance described of the state and discipline of the first community of Christians, *to the very letter*; 13. And all this, as nothing new in Philo's time, but of *then* long-established notoriety and venerable antiquity: yet Philo, who wrote before Josephus, and gave this particular description of Egyptian monkery, when Jesus Christ, if such a person had ever existed, was not above ten years of age, and at least fifty years, before the existence of any Christian writing whatever, has never once thrown out the remotest hint, that he had ever heard of the existence of Christ, of Christianity, or of Christians.



CHAPTER X.

COROLLARIES.

1. SHOULD it turn out, that the text of Philo, as it may have come down to our times, presents material discrepancies from the report which Eusebius has here made of it; that discovery would bring no relief to the cogency of the demonstration resulting from Eusebius's testimony merely; because it is with Eusebius alone, that we are in this investigation concerned; and,

2. Because Christianity would be but little the gainer by overthrowing the credibility of Eusebius in this instance, at so dear an expence, as the necessary destruction of his credibility in all others. If we are not to give Eusebius credit for ability and integrity, to make a fair and accurate quotation, upon a matter that could have no room for mistake, or excuse for ignorance ; if on such a matter he would knowingly and wilfully deceive us ; and the variations of the text of Philo, from the quotations he has given us, be held a sufficient demonstration that he has done so : there remains no alternative, but that his testimony must lose its claim on our confidence, in all other cases whatever : with the credit of Eusebius must go, all that Eusebius's authority upheld, and the three first ages of Christianity, will remain without an historian, or but as

“—————A tale,
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.”

But the evidences of the Christian religion are not yet in this distress.

The testimony of Eusebius on this subject, is neither more nor less valid, for any confirmation or impeachment it might receive, from any extant copies of the writings of *Philo*.

3. Because, nothing is more likely, than that the text of *Philo*, might have been altered purposely to produce such an appearance of discrepancy, and so to supply to Christians, (what 'tis known they would stop at no means to come by,) a caveat and evitaton of the most unguarded and portentous *giving-of-tongue*, that ever fell from so shrewd and able an historian ; and,

4. Because, nothing is more certain, than that no writings have ever been safe from such interpolations ; the text of the New Testament itself, at this day, presenting us with innumerable texts, which were not contained in its earlier copies, and being found deficient of many texts that were in those copies.*

5. We have certainly Eusebius's testimony in this chapter, and in such a state as that it may be depended on, as being *bona fide* his testimony, really and fairly exhibiting to us, what his view and judgment of Christianity was, or—(the Christian is welcome to the alternative !)

* See Chapter 16.

13. The learned Basnage* has been at the pains of examining with the most critical accuracy, the curious treatise of Philo, on which our Eusebius builds his argument, that the ancient sect of the Therapeutæ were really Christians so many centuries before Christ, and were actually in possession of those very writings which have become our gospels and epistles.

14. Gibbon, with that matchless power of sarcasm, which, in so little said, conveys so much intended, and which carries instruction and conviction to the mind, by making what is said, knock at the door to ask admission for what is *not* said,† significantly tells us that, “by proving that this treatise of Philo was composed as early as the time of Augustus, Basnage has demonstrated, *in spite of Eusebius*, and a crowd of modern Catholics, that the Therapeutæ were neither Christians nor monks. It still remains probable, (adds the historian), that they changed their name, preserved their manners, adopted some new articles of faith, and gradually became the fathers of the Egyptian Ascetics.”—*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. 15, note.

15. Under the overt sense of this important criticism, the sagacious historian protects his call on our observance of the monstrous absurdity of a modern theologian attempting to demonstrate what primitive Christianity was, *in spite of* the only authority from which our knowledge of primitive Christianity can be derived, and challenging our surrender to *his* peculiar view of the subject, in preference to the conclusions of a crowd of modern Catholics, who are certainly as likely to know, and as able to judge, as himself.

16. Nor are we to overlook the palpable inference, that a demonstration that this treatise of Philo was written as early as the time of Augustus; so far from demonstrating the conclusion which the demonstrator aims to establish, demonstrates all the premises and grounds of the very opposite conclusion.

* Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*. l. 2, c. 20, *et seq.*

† Could any jibe be keener than his remark on the convenience of the time fixed on by divine providence, for the introduction of Christianity; when the Pagan philosophers, and the Pagans generally, were become quite indifferent to the old forms of idolatry:—“Some deities of a more recent and fashionable cast, might soon have occupied the deserted temples of Jupiter and Apollo, if in the decisive moment, the wisdom of providence had not interposed a genuine revelation.”—Chap. 15. How honest must the Pagan priests have been, to have owned that *their* revelations were not genuine!

17. The apology for this dilemma, so sarcastically suggested by Gibbon, that "it is probable that these Therapeutæ changed their name," conveys the real truth of the matter, in the equally suggested probability, that their name was *changed* for them. It was not *they* who embraced Christianity, but Christianity that embraced them.

18. We know that those most admired compositions of Shakspeare and Otway, the "Hamlet" and "Venice Preserved," as now presented to the public, are but little like the first draughts of them, as they fell from the pen of those great authors; yet no one doubts their proper origination, nor thinks of ascribing the merit of them to any other than those authors, though they be re-edited with thousands of various readings, and we are now content to recognise as the best copies, the "Hamlet" *according to* Malone or Garrick, and the "Venice Preserved" *according to* Colley Cibber.

19. Considering the remote antiquity in which all evidence on the subject must necessarily be obscured. So positive and distinct an avowal as this, of the very highest authority that could possibly be, or be pretended, that the gospels and epistles of the New Testament, constituted the sacred writings of the ancient sect of the Therapeutæ, before the era which modern Christians have unluckily assigned as that of the birth of Christ; supported as that avowal is, by internal evidence and demonstrations of those scriptures themselves, even in the state in which they have come down to us, and explaining and accounting as that avowal does, for all the circumstances and phænomena that have attended those scriptures, which no other hypothesis can explain or account for, without calling in the desperate madness of supposing the operation of supernatural causes:—we hold ourselves to have presented a demonstration of certainty, than which history hath nothing more certain—that the writings contained in the New Testament, are hereby clearly traced up to the Therapeutan monks *before* the Augustan age; and that no ancient, or equally ancient work, was ever by more satisfactory evidence, shown to have been the composition of the author to whom it has been ascribed, than that by which the writings of the New Testament are proved to have been the works of those monks.

20. To be sure they have been re-edited from time to time, and all convenient alterations and substitutions made upon them, "to accommodate them to the faith of the

orthodox.”* Some entire scenes of the drama have been rejected, and some suggested emendations of early critics have been adopted into the text; the names of Pontius Pilate, Herod, Archelaus, Caiaphas, &c. picked out of Josephus’s and other histories, have been substituted in the place of the original *dramatis personæ*: and since it has been found expedient to conceal the plagiarism, to pretend a later date, and a wholly different origination, texts have been introduced, directly impugning the known sentiments and opinions of the original authors: by an exquisite shuffle of ecclesiastical management, what was really the *origination* of Christianity, has been represented as a *corruption* of it. The epocha and reign of monkish influence and monkish principles, has been wilfully misdated; those who are known, and demonstrated by the clearest evidence of independent history, to have existed for ages *before* the Christian era, are represented to have sprung up, in the second, third, or fourth century of that era; and in spite of the still remaining awkwardness and hideousness of the dilemma, that so pure and holy a religion, should come so soon to have been so universally misunderstood; the monks who originated, are branded as the monks who corrupted; the makers for the marrers: and it has remained for Protestant illumination, after sixteen hundred years of dark ages, to discover evidence that escaped the observance of the very authorities from which it is derived, and to show us divine inspiration, and more than human means for the exaltation and improvement of the human character, in the hands of monks and solitaires, eremites and friars.

21. We have here the clearest and most complete solution of the difficulty that seems to have so much perplexed the faith of the Unitarian Christian, Evanson, in his *Dissonance of the Four Gospels*;† namely—that though

* See Manifesto of the Christian Evidence Society.

† This very ingenious and interesting work, as published by one who was a preacher in the Unitarian connection, and who professes himself to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, is another, added to the many instances we meet with, of the correct and even powerful acting of the mind, in most able criticism, in deep research, and shrewd discernment, while yet labouring under an insanity, with respect to some particular modifications of thought, so egregious as to betray itself even to the observance of a child. Mr. Evanson rejected the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John, and very many parts of St. Luke; he rejected the Epistles to the Romans, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, to Titus, and the Hebrews, the two Epistles of Peter, the three of John, and the Revelations; each of which he convicts of evident interpolation, and strong marks of forgery; yet, he believed in the resurrection of Christ, and “in all the obvious and simple, but important *truths*, of the new covenant of the gospel,”—Page 289, (the last.)

Gibbon,) and its proximity to Palestine, gave an easy entrance to the new religion. It was, *at first*,* embraced by great numbers of the Therapeutæ, or Essenians, of the lake Mareotis, a Jewish sect which had abated much of its reverence for the Mosaic ceremonies. The austere life of the Essenians, their feasts and excommunications, the community of goods, their love of celibacy, their zeal for martyrdom, and the warmth, though not the purity of their faith, ALREADY offered a very lively image of the primitive discipline. It was in the school of Alexandria, that the Christian theology appears to have assumed a regular and scientific form; and when Hadrian visited Egypt, he found a church composed of Jews and Greeks, sufficiently important to attract the notice of that inquisitive prince."—*Gibbon*, chap. 15.

The progress of Christianity was for a long time confined within the limits of this single city (of Alexandria); and so slow was the progress of this religion, that notwithstanding the rhetorical flourishes and hyperbolical exaggerations of the Fathers, "we are possessed of an authentic record, which attests the state of religion in the first and most populous city of the then known world. In Rome—about the middle of the third century, and after a peace of thirty-eight years; the clergy consisted but of *one* bishop, *forty-six* presbyters, *fourteen* deacons, *forty-two* acolythes, and *fifty* readers, exorcists and porters. We may venture, (concludes the great historian) to estimate the Christians at Rome, at about *fifty thousand*, when the total number of inhabitants cannot be taken at less than a *million*; and of the whole Roman Empire, the most favourable calculation that can be deduced from the examples of Antioch and of Rome, will not permit us to imagine that more than a twentieth part of the subjects of the Empire had enlisted themselves under the banner of the cross, before the important conversion of the Emperor Constantine."—*Ibid*.

25. It should never be forgotten, that miraculously rapid as we are sometimes told the propagation of the gospel was, it was first preached in England by Austin, the monk, under commission from Pope Gregory, towards the end of the seventh century. So that the *good news* of salvation, in travelling from the supposed scene of action

* Yes, at first! at first! Before the disciples were called Christians at Antioch—before the name of *Jesus of Nazareth* had been heard of at Jerusalem.

first and earliest documents of it that can be produced, present us with all the full ripe arrogance of an already established hierarchy ; bishops disputing for their prerogatives, and throne-enseated prelates demanding and receiving more than the honours of temporal sovereignty, from their cringing vassals, and denouncing worse than inflictions of temporal punishment against the heretics who should presume to resist their decrees, or dispute their authority.

30. We find the episcopal form of government, even before the end of the first century, fully established ; and if not the very Galilean fishermen themselves, at least those who are called the *apostolic fathers*, and who are supposed to have received their authority and doctrine immediately from them, established in all the pride, pomp, and magnificence of sovereign pontiffs, and lords of the lives and fortunes,* as well as of the faith of their flocks ; and every where inculcating, as the first axiom of all morality and virtue, that there was no sin so great, as that of resistance to the authority of a bishop.

31. “ Since the time of Tertullian and Irenæus, it has been a fact, as well as a maxim, *Nulla ecclesia sine episcopo*—no church without a bishop.”—*Gibbon*.

32. We find Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, even while the Apostles, or John, at least, is supposed to have been living, venturing to stake his soul for theirs, and himself the expiatory offering, for those who should duly obey their bishop ; and,

33. Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria the very seat and centre of the Therapeutan doctrine, in his epistles to Novatius, maintains that schismatics, or those who should venture to follow any opinions unsanctioned by the bishop, were “renegadoes, apostates, malignants, paricides, anti-christs, blasphemers, the devil’s priests, villainous, and perfidious, were without hope, had no right to the promises, could not be saved, were, no more Christians than the devil, could not go to heaven, the hottest part of hell their portion, their preaching poisonous, their baptism pestiferous, their persons accursed, &c.

* St. Peter put Ananias and Sapphira to death, for not giving him all the money he wanted.—Acts v. St. Paul ordered the Corinthian “to be delivered to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, for having overlooked the rules of the Therapeutan college, in a love affair.”—1 Corinth. v. The power of the church could never have been more fully established than when such outrageous injustice was above all responsibility.

&c., and much more, to the same heavenly-tempered purport.”*

34. Such a state of things, such sentiments and language, and the like thereof, invariably found as it is in the very earliest documents of Christianity that can be adduced, and attested by the corroboration of independent historical evidence, is utterly incongruous, wholly irreconcilable and out of keeping with any possibility of the existence of the circumstances under which the Christian revelation is generally supposed to have made its appearance on earth.

35. But it is in perfect probability and in entire coincidence with all the circumstances discovered to us by this wonderful passage of Eusebius, from whom we learn that the Evangelist, St. Mark, was believed to have been the first who extended his travels into Egypt, and became the founder of this same Therapeutan church, in the city of Alexandria, by preaching in the first instance to them, the gospel which has come down to us under his name.†

36. Even the necessary decency of supposing that at least one of the Evangelists should have written a gospel in the language of his own country, has been given up, with the pitiful apology, that the invincible unbelief of the Hebrew nation, rendered the gospel which St. Matthew *may be supposed* to have written in Hebrew, not worth preserving. So that no gospel, in the language of the country

* Quoted in the Principles of the Cyprianic Age, p. 19. A very rare and curious work (by J. S. that is, John Sage, a Scottish bishop, 1695,) preserved in Sion College library, from whence lent to my use, by the Rev. Dr. Gaskin, Secretary of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

† But what if Mark himself, as well as his colleagues, were really no Jews at all, but native Egyptians, and bishops of this *pre-existent* Therapeutan church; the words of Eusebius may present a different sense to the eye of faith, they admit of no other rational understanding.

Τότερον δὲ μαρκὸν πρῶτον φασὶν ἐπὶ τῆς αἰγυπτῆς στείλαμενον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ὁ δὲ καὶ συνεγραψάτο, κηρυξάει, ἐκκλησίας τε πρῶτον ἐπ’ αὐτῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας συστήσασθαι, τῶσαντὴ δ’ ἀρὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ διὰ πεπιστευκότων πληθὺς ἀνδρῶν τε καὶ γυναικῶν ἐκ πρώτης ἐπιβολῆς συνιστῇ δι’ ἀσκητικῆς φιλοσοφωτάτης τε καὶ σφοδρότατης, ὡς καὶ γραφῆς αὐτ’ ἀξιώσαι τὰς διατριβὰς, καὶ τὰς συνηλυσίαις τὰ τε συμπόσια καὶ τὰσαν τὴν ἀλλήν τε βίω ἀγωγὴν τὸν φίλον—i. e. “But this Mark, they say, first betook himself into Egypt, and preached the gospel, that which he also wrote, and first established the churches of Alexandria; and such a multitude, both of men and women, were assembled upon his first attempt, on account of his more philosophical and severe asceticism, that Philo held it worthy to commit to writing an account of their exercises and assemblies, their meals, and their whole discipline of life.” Such is the whole of the 15th chapter of the second book of Eusebius’s Ecclesiastical History, discovering to us, the now demonstrated and indisputable fact, that monkery or asceticism, was the first and earliest type of Christianity; that its first preachers were monks; and that not only the doctrines, but that the gospels which contain them, were already extant in the world, many years before the epocha assigned to the birth of Christ.

in which its stupendous events are said to have happened, can be shown to have been ever in existence.

We should naturally think, that any thing rather than an account of events that had really happened, must have been intended by English authors, who chose to write the history of England, in any other language than English. But the conduct of the Evangelists is still more unaccountable, in that they must have gone so much out of their way, to deprive their countrymen of the knowledge of salvation, to write in a language, that 'tis certain they could never have understood themselves, without divine inspiration. Are we to suppose that persons of their mean and humble rank, in the most barbarous province of the Roman Empire, were better educated than persons of the same calling at this day in any country in Christendom, and that the fishermen of the Galilean lake, could handle the pen of the ready writer, in an age, ages before the age, in which, as yet, even prelates, priests, and princes, were marksmen, and comprehended their whole extent of literature, in the sign of the X.

CHAPTER XI.

CORROBORATIONS OF THE EVIDENCE ARISING FROM THE ADMISSIONS OF EUSEBIUS, IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ITSELF.

IN order to enable the reader to see and apply the force of these admissions and their corollaries, and for the innumerable necessities of reference throughout this *DIEGESIS*, I have presented him with the best account of the times and places usually assigned as those of the first publication of the several books of the New Testament, on the very highest authority that Christians themselves can affect to refer to on this subject, which he will find in the chapter of Tables.

1. Upon referring to this, it will be seen, that the highest authorities admit, that all of the epistles were written some considerable time before any of the four gospels; and as a necessary consequence it follows, that they must have been written at a still more considerable length of time, before any one of those gospels could have come into general use and notoriety.

2. Nor must we forget, that from the very nature of epistolary writing, the information contained in letters,

remembrance of me. After the same manner also, he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, *This cup is the New Testament in my blood : this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

This passage, indeed, has the appearance of being a direct quotation from the text of Luke's gospel, xxii. verses 19, 20. "*And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you : this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*"

If there were no relieving alternative, but that the former of these passages must be acknowledged to be a quotation from the latter, as certainly no work could be quoted before it existed ; the arrangement, which it will be seen by Dr. Lardner's table, makes the Epistle to have been written at least six years before the Gospel, is convicted of anachronism ; and as far as this evidence is concerned, divines are thrown again upon the stakes of all the difficulties that attend the hypothesis they have been at such pains to evade.

1. But the evidently mystical sense of the words themselves.

2. The distinct declaration of the apostle in *this* place, that he had received what he delivered *from the Lord* ;

3. And in other places (Gal. i. 11), that "*the gospel which he preached was not after man ; for he neither received it of man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ ;*

4. The most striking resemblance and coincidence of these words with the formularies and ritual of the Pagan mysteries of Eleusis ;

5. And the admission in the preface of Luke's Gospel, that his work was only a compilation of previously existing documents, and derived in common with the works which many had taken in hand before him to copy from the *DIEGESIS*,* or original narration preserved in the sacred archives of the church :

These are arguments entirely sufficient to relieve the dilemma, and to leave it rather probable that Luke took his

* The first verse of St. Luke's Gospel, if Gospel-readers could but see what was under their nose, would prevent their ever more pretending that the Gospels were original compositions. "*Forasmuch as many had taken in hand to set the DIEGESIS in order,*" which was the original from which the Apocryphal Gospels were taken, and *afterward*, the improved versions ascribed to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which obtained final approbation, and so caused not only the previous versions, but the *DIEGESIS* itself, from which they were all taken, to be laid aside.



and not given to filthy lucre," (Tit. i. 7,) as some of that right-reverend order must have been proved to be, ere such admonitions could have been called for; yet called for they were, and necessary they had become, as the reader will see by the table, some eight or ten years before the date assigned to the writing of the four Gospels.

"The Essenians, of whom Philo has written the history, were confessedly Pythagorians, and I think we may see some traces of these people among the Druids. They existed before Christianity, and lived in buildings called monasteria or monasteries, and were called Koinobioi* or Cœnobites. They were of three kinds, some never married, others of them did. They are most highly spoken of by all the authors of antiquity who have named them."—

The Celtic Druids, by Godfrey Higgins, Esq.† A. D. 1827, p. 125.

Were there any degree of difficulty in accounting for such a scheme of tyrannous aggrandisement, and of obtaining unbounded power and influence over the subjugated reason of mankind, philosophy, that forbids all supposition of supernatural agency, would acknowledge that difficulty; but to imagine any, in accounting for the rise and progress of Christianity, we must, by a laborious effort of imagination, imagine nature to be the very reverse in every thing from what we experience it to be; we must suppose a man to be at a loss to find his own head; we must suppose Infinite Wisdom teaching trickery to a thief, and the orchestra of the spheres supplying resin for a fiddlestick—introducing our God not to extricate the mystery of the scene, but to sweep the stage, and grease the pulleys.

CHAPTER XII.

REFERENCES TO THE MONKISH OR THERAPEUTAN DOCTRINES, TO BE TRACED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

1. "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven.*"—Matt. v. 3.

This, the first principle put into the mouth of the Galilean Thaumaturge, was also the first principle of the

* *Koinobioi*—living in common. Acts iv. 32. *Ἦν αὐτοῖς πάντα κοῖνα*—"they had all things in common."

† Mr. Higgins's testimony is the more valuable, as it is that of a witness averse to the conclusions to which he marshals us the way. His splendid work, instructive and interesting as it is in the highest degree, though superfluously orthodox, has delightfully beguiled the tedium of many of my prison-hours.

Therapeutæ, and as such had been known and taught for ages before the time assigned to the first publication of the Gospel.

It is to be found in the previously existing writings of Menander, in the sentence *δεῖ τοὺς πτωχοὺς οἰ παρὴντας τῶν θεῶν*—*We ought to consider the poor as especially belonging to the gods*; and in the ancient Latin adage, "*Bonæ mentis soror paupertas*"—*Poverty is the sister of a good mind*. It is observable, that this Menander the comedian, is not only quoted by name, by the first of the Fathers (not apostolical), Justin Martyr, in his apology to the Emperor Adrian, as one of the authorities with whom the Christians held so many sentiments in common, but is again plagiarised into the text of 1 Cor. xv. 33—*Φθαρτοὺς ἡθὴν χειροῦ οὐκ αἰσῶται κακὰ*—"*Evil communications corrupt good manners.*"

2. "*And the disciples came and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.*"—Matt. xiii. 10. "*Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables; that seeing, they may see and not perceive, and hearing, they may hear and not understand.*"—Mark iv. 11.

Surely, here, and in the innumerable passages to the same effect, the principle of deceiving the vulgar is held forth in its most disgusting deformity. Here the double and mystical-sense system, as adopted by the Therapeutæ, is put in full exemplification.

3. "*And there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.*"—Matt. xix. 12.

Let the reader only ask himself the obvious questions, what eunuchs could they be? Certainly, not followers of the law of Moses, which held a personal defect, however involuntarily incurred, as disqualifying the unfortunate from ever entering into the congregation of the Lord, Deut. xxiii. 1. Nor was a future state of rewards ever propounded to the selfishness or ambition of the children of Israel.

4. John the Baptist is described as a *Monk*, residing in the wilderness, practising all the austerities of the *contemplative life*, neither eating nor drinking in observance of the demands of nature; "*his food was locusts and wild-honey*:" and not only a monk, but a father confessor, since "*all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, were all bap-*

tized of him, *confessing their sins.*" Here, then, is certainly an Ascetic—in the strictest circumstances of description, a *Monkish confessor*—the admitted *forerunner* of Christ, of whom he is represented as saying, that "Moses and the prophets were until John the Baptist, but since then the kingdom of God* was preached." The great absurdity, however, of representing the sinless Jesus as receiving baptism of John for the remission of his sins, would have been evaded, had the compilers of our Gospels stuck to the text of the Gospel according to the Hebrews, or that of these Hebrew-descended Therapeuts, which Lessing and Niemeyer† have so convincingly shown to have been the original from which their legends are copied, and from which it appears that Jesus actually refused to be baptized, saying, "What sin have I committed, that I should be baptized by him?" And how could that horrible species of self-martyrdom, the greatest evidence of sincerity in the faith that could be imagined, have been practised "*for the kingdom of heaven's sake,*" if the kingdom of heaven had not been propounded to the faith of these visionaries as the reward of such a sacrifice, sufficiently long before, and sufficiently notoriously, to be quoted thus as an historical example, by the speaker in the text of Matthew?

It is evident that Origen, the most distinguished and learned of all the Christian Fathers, must have read Christ's recommendation of this suicidal act in its very strongest sense, or have found it in some earlier copies of the Gospel than have come down to us, urged in stronger terms, or his excellent understanding would never have fallen under the horrors of a belief that it was necessary to imitate the example thus commended, and to prepare himself for *singing* in heaven, by spoiling his voice for preaching upon earth.

5. But Matt. xviii. 15, betrays, in the most indisputable evidence, the previous existence and established discipline of a Christian church, such as that of the Therapeutæ is described to have been, from *any length of time* anterior to the Christian era.

"Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother: 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the

* This phrase, *the kingdom of God*, and all its synonymes, was peculiarly characteristic of the monkish fraternity of Egypt—the dynasty of priests, as paramount to that of kings.

† Quoted in Marsh's *Michaelis*, and hereafter in this *DIALOGUE*.

no conceivable reason why the peculiar tenets of a particular sect should be singled out for particular condemnation, unless the condemners stood in some more immediate relation, or knew something more particularly of the tenets so condemned; than of any other condemnable tenets.

The force of so particular a condemnation of *almost all that was peculiar*, involves as particular an approbation and sanction of whatever it was that was not included in so particular a condemnation.

Not to object, that, in ordinary fairness, the gauging of the Essenian tenets so as to determine *which*, and *how many* of them, amounted to *almost all*, should hardly be trusted to the fidelity of those who have the strongest interest in disparaging and under-rating those tenets.

Again, the conjoining *Christ and his Apostles* as concurring in the condemnation of almost all that was peculiar to this sect, is assuming a concurrence unsupported by evidence, and inconsequential in reason.

It by no means follows, that *he* and *they*, in every instance, must have approved and condemned by the same rule; the need they had of being instructed by him, is a *reason*, and the rebukes they frequently received from him, is a *proof*, that *their* judgments and *his* might be the reverse of each other.

Nor is it a just and fair conclusion, that *all* the apostles of Christ condemned what it cannot be shown that more than one of them condemned, and which all the rest may in all probability have approved.

Nor, if it be Paul alone who hath condemned, is it just or fair to conclude that even *one* of the apostles of Christ has done so; since the claim of Paul to be considered as one of the apostles of Christ, rests on his own presumption only, and, to say the least against it, is in the highest degree questionable.*

Surely, nothing could be *more peculiar* to any sect, than the conceit of making themselves "*Eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake*;" and as surely, it is any other sort of language rather than that of condemnation, in which Christ is represented as speaking of *that* peculiarity, Matt. xix. 12.

* He is recognized only in the 2d Epistle of Peter, chap. iii. verse 14, as a *beloved brother*, which itself is no style or designation of *apostleship*, even if the authenticity of this epistle, in which it is contained, were indisputable, which it is not.—See *Marsh's Michaelis*, in loco.

“Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father which is in heaven.”—Matt. xxiii. 9. “They believed the soul would live for ever; but they seem to have denied the resurrection of the body, which, according to their principles, would only render the soul sinful, by being re-united with it. They attributed a natural holiness to the Sabbath-day, because it is the seventh, and because the number (seven) results from adding the sides of a square to those of a triangle—thus: Σ They spent most of their time in contemplation, which they called philosophical, and boasted of a philosophy pretended to be derived from their ancestors. And, notwithstanding their general profession of the contemplative life, great numbers of their sect were established in populous towns. “Nor is it one city only that they occupy,” says Josephus, “but many dwelt in each city; and the provider for the faction is especially discernible among strangers, by his engagement in storing up clothing and necessary articles :”* from which it should seem they were the old-clothes-men of the world, from the remotest antiquity. “It is manifest,” argues Michaelis,† “that the Epistle to the Ephesians, that to the Colossians, and the 1st to Timothy, were written with a view of confuting this sect; for even the very words which Philo has used in describing their tenets, are for the most part retained by St. Paul.

9. “And a certain Jew, named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John; and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue; whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.”—Acts xviii. 24.

Let the reader follow the clue that is here put into his hands, in this historical and evidently credible part of the real adventures of these schismatical missionaries from the original Essenian sect. Here is Apollos, of Pagan-

* Μία εκ εστιν αυτων η πολις, αλλ εν εκαστη κατοικουσι, πολλοι.—Κηδεμων εν εκαστη πολει το ταγματος εξαιρετως των ξενων αποδεικνυται; ταμιευων ισθμητα και τα επιτηδεια.—Bell. Jud. lib. 2, s. 4.

† Michaelis, in his Introduction to the New Testament, by Herbert Marsh, now Bishop of Peterborough, vol. 4, p. 84.

munity: so that the only question on this evidence is, which party had the juster claim to a faculty, of which reason denies the possibility to either? In a word, we have only to decide who were the *greater*—that is, the more successful impostors.

“Among the first professors of Christianity,” says Mosheim, “there were few men of learning—few who had capacity enough to insinuate into the minds of a *gross and ignorant multitude*, the knowledge of divine things, God, therefore, in his infinite wisdom, judged it necessary to raise up in many churches, extraordinary teachers, who were to discourse in the public assemblies, upon the various points of the Christian doctrine, and to treat with the people in the name of God, as guided by his direction, and clothed with his authority. Such were the prophets of the New Testament. They were invested with the power of censuring publicly such as had been guilty of any irregularity; but to prevent the abuses which designing men might make of this institution, by pretending to this extraordinary character, in order to execute unworthy ends, there were always present in the public auditories, judges DIVINELY APPOINTED, who, by certain and infallible marks, were able to distinguish the false prophets from the true. This order of *prophets* ceased, when the want of teachers, which gave rise to it, was abundantly supplied.”
—*Mosh. Eccl. Hist.* vol. 1, p. 102.

The mind smarts for the degradation which the necessity of maintaining popular delusion could impose on so intelligent and highly-cultivated a scholar, in obliging him to descend to this language of utter idiotcy,—this reasoning that might disgrace the nursery. Here is infinite wisdom, to be sure, having recourse to expedients to *insinuate* its communications into the minds of *the gross and ignorant multitude*; divinely raised-up *prophets*, clothed with the authority of God himself; and divinely appointed *judges*, clothed with still higher authority, to judge whether infinite wisdom was right or wrong, but leaving the *gross and ignorant multitude* as much in need as ever of some *other* divinely appointed, still higher judges, to judge whether the other judges judged fairly; as 'tis certain that *the gross and ignorant multitude*, for whose benefit the divine insinuations were intended, were held to be no judges at all, and God or Devil was all as one to them. How must a man have looked when he reasoned thus? But the absurdity of this reasoning is not worse than an attempt

to give respectability to the authority which makes it the best account that can be given of the matter.

10. "*How is it,*" asks the Apostle himself, that "*every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation? If there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?*"—1 Cor. xiv. 23.

Could language convey clearer evidence, that in the worst and grossest sense of what Philo or Josephus have represented the Essenian churches to have been, *that in reality the first assemblies of these primitive christians were.* And this is a state of things described as obtaining, several years before the writing of any one of our four Gospels.

If there were really any features of distinctive and different origination between these long anterior Therapeutan societies, and those who, in an after-age, acquired the name of Christian churches, all traces of that distinctiveness are lost. To all scope of history, and possibility of understanding, they must be pronounced and considered to be, one and the same class and order of religious fanatics.

As for the pretence to any thing supernatural, philosophy teaches us to view it only as a certain and incontestible mark of imposture, by whomsoever advanced. PROPHECY! the very name of such a thing is a surrender of all pretence to evidence; 'tis the language of insanity! The feter of the charnel-house is not more charged with its admonition to our bodily health, to withdraw from the proximities of death, than the cracky sound of the thing is, with warning to our reason, that we are out of the regions of sobriety, wherever it is so much as seriously spoken of: no honest man ever pretended to it.

11. Matthew (xviii. 18) relates a story of Jesus rebuking a devil who kept his hold so obstinately on the body of a boy, that his disciples, with all the miraculous powers with which he had previously gifted them, were unable to cast him out; which Jesus is represented as accounting for by saying, "*Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer.*"—Matt. xviii. 21.

"Now we know," says Michaelis, "that the Jews ascribed almost all diseases to the influence of evil spirits. To cure a disease, therefore, was, according to their notions, to expel an evil spirit: this they pretended to

effect by charms and herbs; and we have seen from Eusebius, what extraordinary efficacy and virtue the Therapeutans ascribed to prayer and fasting."

12. The whole doctrine of election, which distinguishes the epistolary writings of St. Paul, is but an application to the persons whom he addresses, of the notions which the Jews from previous ages had maintained, whose hopes of acceptance with God were founded on the merits of their ancestry. *We have Abraham to our father*, is represented as the reason they offered, why they had no need to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. One of their principal maxims was, כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא—that is, "All Israel have the portion of eternal life allotted to them."

Another of the Jewish doctrines is, "God promised to Abraham, that if his children were wicked, he would consider them as righteous on account of the sweet odour of his circumcised foreskin."*

The holding out a similar inducement to the selfishness and cruelty of the Gentile nations, with reservation of Jewish prerogative, constituted all the difference of the reformed *Esseneism*, after it took the name of Christianity.

13. The allegorical method of expounding their scriptures, so characteristic of the Therapeutan monks, we find entirely adopted and avowed by Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, chap. 4. in which, of the most simple and obvious apparent facts of the Old Testament, he asserts, "*which things are an allegory.*" The two sons of Abraham are to be understood as two covenants; his kept-mistress is a mountain in Arabia; and, again, the mountain in Arabia, is the city Jerusalem.

14. Again, in 2 Cor. iii. 6, the allegorical method, so entirely Essenian, is spoken of as the chief design and intention of the Gospel ministry, and that too, even with respect to the sense of writings which constituted what was known and recognized as the *New Testament*, when this epistle was written, of which, therefore, the four Gospels which have come down to us, could have constituted no part; as it will be seen by the table, that they were not written till six or seven years after this epistle.

"God also hath made us able ministers of the *New Testament*, not of the letter, but of the spirit, for the letter killeth," &c. which principle the Christian Fathers carried to such an

* *Pugio Fidei*. v. 3, dia. 3, cap. 16, quoted in *Michaelis*, vol. 4. p. 95.

prepare a place for you."—John xiv. 2. A fair translation of the passage would render it "In my father's house are many monasteries."—*Εν τη οικία του πατρος μου, μοναι πολλαι εισιν.*

The translation here, egregiously protestantizes. *Monastery* is the correct rendering of the word *μονη*; and of all possible derivatives and combinations of it; the leading or radical idea is, a *solitary abode*, where each individual is excluded, or excludes himself, from intercourse with others.

To those who consider Monachism, or Monkery, as a corruption of Christianity, sprung up in some later age, this and such like texts must bear the appearance of interpolations, or modernisms, tending to betray a later date than that challenged for these writings. But, taking nature for our guide, we must necessarily conclude, that an imperfect and defective system was infinitely more likely to improve by time, and gradually to throw off its original imperfections and defects, than a system that started from a state of excellence and perfection at first, to become in a few ages entirely deteriorated and corrupted.

The positive evidence, then, of Philo, to the prior existence of Monkery, has *that* challenge on our conviction, which must ever attend the highest species of testimony, when borne to the highest degree of probability.

19. In the first verse of the Epistle to the Philippians, there is a distinction made between the general congregation of *the Saints*, or Christians, and the Bishops and Deacons, which, by the learned Evanson, is adduced as an instance savouring very strongly of a much later age than that of the Apostles.—*Dissonance*, p. 264.

The antipapistical antipathies of this Unitarian divine, allowed him only to see matter of offence in the term *SAINTS*, an order of men, as he supposes, first constituted by the superstitious piety of the Roman Catholic Church: but surely a moment's ingenuous speculation on the probabilities of circumstances, would discover matter of equal incongruity in the idea of the existence of the distinct orders of bishops and deacons, in a flourishing national church, when this epistle was written, ten or twelve years before the date of any one of our four gospels, and within the life time of one who was the cotemporary of Christ, and the companion of his immediate disciples.

That church, and all others that could have had in them the distinct orders of bishops and deacons, must

have been *ancient* at the time. There could be no bishops and deacons among new converts. Such a state of the church, at that time, involves a certain demonstration, that its doctrine, discipline and government must have been of many years standing, anterior to the Augustan age.

20. It is a violence to imagination, and costs it a sort of painful effort to *suppose* that St. Paul could have written his epistle to the Romans, in the Greek language: We could as easily fancy a general address to the inhabitants of London, in Arabic.

21. In the earliest Greco-Latin Codices, the passage, Romans xii. 13. "*Distributing to the necessity of saints.*"—Ταῖς χρείαις τῶν ἁγίων κοινωνοῦντες—stood "communicating to the memories of the saints." i. e.—Ταῖς μνηταῖς τῶν ἁγίων κ. τ. λ.—Of this passage, Michaelis remarks, that it conveys the language and sentiments of a later age; ἅγιος, being used in the ecclesiastical sense of the word, for *saints* or *martyrs*, characters unknown at Rome, when St. Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans; and this fault, for a fault he conceives it evidently is, could hardly have taken place before the end of the second, or the beginning of the third century.

Mosheim describes the *festivals* and *commemorations of the martyrs*, being celebrated in the most extravagant manner, as characteristic of the depravity of the fourth century: and all *Protestant* ecclesiastics, strain every nerve to throw the odium of what they esteem corruptions of the primitive purity, on later ages.

"It is well known, among other things, what opportunities of sinning were offered to the licentious, by what were called the vigils of Easter and Whitsuntide, or Pentecost." Mosheim—vol. i. p. 398. We find however that this religious observation of the vigils of the great festivals, especially that of Easter, in commemoration of Christ's resurrection, was observed in a distinguished manner among the Therapeutan or Essenians, and as it was an *annual* observance, must have obtained many years before the birth of Christ.—See the translated chapter from Eusebius, verse 41.

22. "*Moreover, brethren, I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of about five hundred brethren at once, of*

whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep : after that, he was seen of James, then of all the apostles ; and last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."—i. Corinth xv. 1.

The writer of this epistle, here refers to higher authority than his own, "*that, which he also received,*" that is, *scriptures*, which related that Christ died for our sins ; that he appeared after his resurrection to five hundred brethren at once, and in an especial manner, to Cephas,* and in a like especial manner, to James.

1. These circumstances partake largely of the more marvellous and exaggerative character of the *apocryphal* gospels. 2. They are certainly not contained in the canonical ones. 3. And yet are insisted on, as so essential to the Christian faith, that unless they were kept in memory, Christians would *have believed in vain*. 4. No laws of evidence would endure the unsupported assumption that the witness, *Cephas*, was the same person as the apostle, *Peter*. 5. Nor were there *twelve* disciples, after Judas, who was one of the number, had hanged himself. 6. Nor is there the least intimation, in any of our gospels, of an especial appearance to *James*. 7. Nor was the number of the brethren, at their first meeting, after Christ's ascension from the top of Mount Olivet, more than "about an hundred and twenty."† 8. Nor was there time.—9. Nor was it possible, that the scriptures, which detailed the circumstances of Christ's appearances after his resurrection, in this exaggerative style, could have been in any way derived from our four gospels, or any of them : they not having been written till twelve years *after* this epistle.‡

That, other scriptures than those which have come down to us, telling the Christian story in a different way, were the original basis of the Christian faith ; and that those *other* scriptures were in vogue and notoriety, not only *before* our gospels were written, but before the events related in our gospels had occurred ; are facts, whose force of evidence amounts to the utmost degree of certainty of which historical fact is capable. That those scriptures were the sacred writings of the Egyptian-Therapeuts described by Philo, and so expressly considered by Eusebius, is matter of the strongest presumption that can be supposed in the absence of all other grounds of presumption.

* Acts i. 15. This Cephas was one of the 70, a wholly different personage from the Peter of the Gospels : to this assurance, we have the positive assertion of Eusebius.

† See the Table of the Times and Places of Writing, &c.

of the prophecy that Antichrist should come : and, 2. To have had faith in it, and expectation of its accomplishment, beforehand : 3. And if the time when this epistle was written (about A. D. 80) was the *last* of Christianity, there can have been no Christianity in the world since then : 4. And if *then*, while St. John was living, Antichrist was come, and it was the *last* time, the Christ whom St. John intended to preach, must have been much earlier in the world than that time. All which agrees in style and manner with the character of an angry Egyptian monk, complaining of the corruptions and perversions which his contemporaries had put upon the pure and original Therapeutan doctrines ; but presents not a single feature in *keeping* with the character of one, supposed to be himself one of the earliest preachers of an entirely new religion, who existed not in the *last* time, but in the *first* ; not after Christianity had run to seed, but before it had fully sprung up. “ And if Christianity,” says Archbishop Wake, “ remained not uncorrupted so long, surely we may say, it came up and was cut down like a flower, and continued not even so long as the usual term of the life of man.”

26. “ *I wrote unto the church ; but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words ; and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the FRIARS, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.*”—John iii. 9. 10.

1. If this John were the disciple of Christ, this text is fatal to the claims of St. John's Gospel, since it shows that the rulers of the church had rejected his writings. 2. Its reference to the circumstances of mendicant friars, or travelling quack-doctors, is as clear as the day. 3. But who was this *Diotrephes*, whose name signifies literally the ward or pupil of Jupiter ? Any thing rather than a Christian name. 4. And with what conceivable state of a Christian community, that *could* have existed during the life-time of one of its first preachers, can we associate the idea of such a struggle for pre-eminence ? The phenomena admit of no solution but that which determines that these writings are the compositions of no such persons as is supposed, and that, however ancient we take them to be, they refer to a state of ecclesiastical polity still more ancient.

27. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls, as THEY that must give an account."—Heb. xiii. 17.

28. "Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God!"—Heb. xiii. 7.

What have we here, but references to ecclesiastical government and spiritual power, already established in all its plenitude? A state of things which could not possibly have existed—a sort of language that could not possibly have been used, in any reference to an authority which had originated within the life-time of the persons so addressed, or to a *word of God*, of which the then preachers, were the first.

29. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ; and no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."—2 Cor. xi. 13. Aye! aye! And with what state of a religion, whose founder had been crucified; and whose doctrines had not yet passed into the hands of a second generation, and whose apostles had nothing but spiritual blessings to confer on others, and nothing but martyrdom to expect for themselves, can we imagine that apostleship to be so winning a game, that the Devil himself would play it?*

THE CONCLUSION

Is inevitable. We are not, perhaps, entitled certainly to pronounce that it was so; but the hypothesis (if it be no more), that Paul and his party were sent out, in the first instance, as apostles, or missionaries, from this previously existing society of *Monks*, which had for ages, or any length of time before, fabricated and been in possession of the *allegorical fiction* of Jesus Christ; that the *Acts of the Apostles*, with the exception of all their *supernatural details*, are a garbled journal of *his real adventures*; and the *Epistles*, with the exception of some improved passages and superior sentiments that have been foisted into them, are such as he wrote to the various communities in which he had established his own independent supremacy, by a successful schism from the mother church: this hypothesis will solve all the phænomena; which is what no other will.

* There are innumerable other passages to the like effect; such as the wild man John *preaching in the wilderness*: *A voice crying in the wilderness*: the miraculous fasting of the old woman *Anna*: the pass-word of the vigilant monks, *Watch and pray!* &c. &c. whose further tractation would detain me too long from worthier matter. Let the reader glance his eye over the New Testament with this observance.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE CLAIMS OF THE SCRIPTURES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TO BE CONSIDERED AS GENUINE AND AUTHENTIC.

PRELIMINARY.

THERE is no greater nor grosser delusion perhaps in the world, than that of the common sophistry of arguing for the genuineness and authenticity of the writings of the New Testament, upon the ridiculous supposition, that the state of things of which we are witnesses, with respect to these writings in our times, is the same, or much like what it was, in the primitive ages; that is, that these writings were generally in the hands of professing Christians, were distinguished as pre-eminently sacred, had their authority universally acknowledged, or were so extensively diffused, that material alterations in them from time to time, could not have been effected without certain discovery, and as certain reprobation of so sacrilegious an attempt.

The very reverse of such an imaginary resemblance of past to present circumstances, is the truth of history, as borne out by the admissions of all who have devoted their time and labours to the investigation of ecclesiastical antiquity.

The learned *Dr. Lardner* is constrained to admit, that "even so late as the middle of the sixth century, the canon of the New Testament had not been settled by any authority that was decisive and universally acknowledged; but Christian people were at liberty to judge for themselves concerning the genuineness of writings proposed to them as apostolical, and to determine according to evidence."—Vol. 3, pp. 54—61.

We have shown also, that the scriptures were not entrusted to the hands of the laity. The mystical sense which we find by the very earliest Fathers to have been attached to them, is the strongest corroboration of those positive testimonies which we have, that the Christian people were kept in the profoundest ignorance of the contents of the sacred volume. The clergy only, were

persons, as those to whom, under those names, they are ascribed, and so to be fairly and honourably genuine and authentic—*this*, their high and independent sanction, would lose nothing, nor even so much as to be brought into suspicion, by a detection of the most manifest forgery and imposture of those subordinate, or, at most, only supplementary writings: so the genuineness of these supplementary writings, involves no presumption of the genuineness or authenticity of those; but rather, as being admitted to have been written earlier than our gospels, and referring continually to gospels still earlier than themselves, which had previously been the rule of faith to so many previously existing churches; these epistles supply one of the most formidable arrays of proof that can possibly be imagined *against* the claims of our gospels; and having served this effect, like expended ammunition that has carried the volley to its aim, they dissipate and break off into the void and incollectible inane. The gospels once convicted of being merely supposititious and furtive compositions, it is not the genuineness and demonstrable authenticity of any other parts of the New Testament, that its advocates will care to defend, or its enemies to impugn. They fall as a matter of course, like the provincial towns and fortresses of a conquered empire, to the masters of the capital.

In this *DIEGESIS*, we shall therefore more especially confine our investigation to the claims of the Evangelical histories; and as our arguments must mainly be derived from the admissions which their best learned and ablest advocates have made with respect to them, we shall throughout, speak of them and of their contents, in the tone and language which courtesy and respect to the feelings of those for whose instruction we write, may reasonably claim from us; and which being understood as adopted for the convenience of argument only, can involve no compromise of sincerity.

CHAPTER XIV.

CANONS OF CRITICISM.—DATA OF CRITICISM.—COROLLARIES.—DR. LARDNER'S TABLE.

CANONS OF CRITICISM.

To be applied in judging the comparative claims of the Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels.

1. The canonical and apocryphal gospels are competitive, i. e. they are reciprocally destructive of each other's pretensions.

2. If the canonical gospels are authentic, the apocryphal gospels are forgeries.

3. If the apocryphal gospels are authentic, the canonical gospels are forgeries.

4. No consideration of the comparative merits or characters of the competitive works, can have place in the consideration of their claims to authenticity.

5. Those writings, which ever they be, or whether they be the better or the worse, which can be shown to have been written *first*, have the superior claim to authenticity.

6. It is impossible that those writings which were the first, could have been written to disparage or supersede those which were written after.

7. Those writings which have the less appearance of art and contrivance, are the first.

8. Those writings which exhibit a more rhetorical construction of language, in the detail of the same events, with explications, suppressions, and variations, whose evident scope is, to render the story more probable, are the later writings.

9. Those writings whose existence is acknowledged by the others, but which themselves acknowledge not those others, are unquestionably the first.

10. There could be no conceivable object or purpose in putting forth writings which were much worse, after the world were in possession of such as were much better.

11. If the story were not true, in the first way of telling it, no improvement in the way of telling it, could render it true.

12. If those, who were only improvers upon the original history, have concealed that fact, and have suffered mankind to understand that the *improvements* were the *originals*;

they are guilty and wicked forgers, and never could have had any other or better intention, than to mislead and deceive mankind.

DATA OF CRITICISM.

To be applied in judging the comparative claims of the Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels.

1. It is manifest and admitted on all hands, that the apocryphal gospels are very silly and artless compositions, "full of pious frauds and fabulous wonders."—*Mosheim, in loco.*

2. It is manifest, and admitted on all hands, that the canonical gospels exhibit a more rhetorical construction of language than the apocryphal, and have a highly-wrought sublimity and grandeur, the like of which is no where to be found in any of the apocryphal gospels.

3. The canonical gospels, but more especially the canonical epistles, which are admitted to have been written *before* the gospels, do in very many places acknowledge the existence and prevalence of those writings which are now called apocryphal.

4. The apocryphal gospels, as far as we have any traces of them left, do no where recognise or acknowledge the writings which are now called canonical.

5. The apocryphal gospels, are quoted by the very earliest Fathers, orthodox, as well as heretical, as reverentially as those which we now call canonical.

6. The apocryphal gospels, are admitted in the New Testament itself, to have been universally received, and to have been the guide and rule of faith to the whole Christian world, before any one of our present canonical gospels, was in existence.

COROLLARIES.

1. Indications of time, discovered in those gospels which were written first, will indicate time *relatively*, to those which were written afterwards—*exempli gratiâ*. It being proved that the legend A. was written before the legend C, there will be proof, that events which were contemporary or antecedent to the writing of A., were antecedent, *a fortiori*, to the writing of C.

2. Indications of the prevalence of a *state of things*, existing when the earlier gospels were written, will indicate relatively the state of things, when the latter

CHAPTER XV.

OF THE FOUR GOSPELS, IN GENERAL.

THE ordinary notion, that the four gospels were written by the persons whose names they bear, and that they have descended to us from original autographs of Matthew and John, immediate disciples, and of Mark and Luke, cotemporaries and companions of Christ ; in like manner as the writings of still more early poets and historians have descended to us, from the pens of the authors to whom they are attributed, is altogether untenable. It has been entirely surrendered by the most able and ingenuous Christian writers, and will no longer be maintained by any but those whose zeal outruns their knowledge, and whose recklessness and temerity of assertion, can serve only to dishonour and betray the cause they so injudiciously seek to defend.

The surrender of a position which the world has for ages been led to consider impregnable, by the admission of all that the early objection of the learned Christian Bishop, FAUSTUS, the Manichean, implied, when he pressed Augustine with that bold challenge which Augustine was unable to answer, that,* “It is certain that the New Testament was not written by Christ himself, nor by his apostles, but a long while after them, by some unknown persons, who lest they should not be credited when they wrote of affairs they were little acquainted with, affixed to their works the names of apostles, or of such as were supposed to have been their companions, asserting that what they had written themselves, was written ACCORDING TO those persons to whom they ascribed it.”

This admission has not been held to be fatal to the claims of divine relation, nor was it held to be so even by the learned Father himself who so strenuously insisted on it, since he declares his own unshaken faith in Christ’s *mystical* crucifixion, notwithstanding.

* Nec ab ipso scriptum constat, nec ab ejus apostolis sed longo post tempore a quibusdam incerti nominis viris, qui ne sibi non haberetur fides scribentibus quæ nescirent, partim apostolorum, partim eorum qui apostolos secuti viderentur nomina scriptorum suorum frontibus indiderunt, asseverantes SECUNDUM eos, se scripsisse quæ scripserunt.—Quoted by Lardner, vol. 2, p. 221.—See Chapter 7, p. 66, of this *DIEGESIS*.

Adroitly handled as the passage has been by the ingenuity of theologians, it has been made rather to subserve the cause of the evidences of the Christian religion, than to injure it. Since though it be admitted, that the Christian world has "*all along been under a delusion*" in this respect, and has held these writings to be of higher authority than they really are ; yet the writings themselves and their authors, are innocent of having contributed to that delusion, and never bore *on* them, nor *in* them, any challenge to so high authority as the mistaken piety of Christians has ascribed to them, but did all along profess no more than to have been written, as Faustus testifies, not *by*, but *according* to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John ; and by persons of whom indeed it is not known who nor what they were, nor was it of any consequence that it should be, after the general acquiescence of the church had established the sufficient correctness of the compilations they had made.

And here the *longo post tempore*, (*the great while after*,) is a favourable presumption of the sufficient opportunity that all persons* had, of knowing and being satisfied, that the gospels which the church received, were indeed all that they purported to be ; that is, faithful narrations of the life and doctrines of Christ, *according* to what could be collected from the verbal accounts which his apostles had given, or by tradition been supposed to have given, and as such, "*worthy of all acceptance*."

While the objection of Faustus, becomes from its own nature the most indubitable and inexceptionable evidence, carrying us up to the very early age, the fourth century, in which he wrote, with a demonstration, that the gospels were then universally known and received, under the precise designation, and none other, than that with which they have come down to us, even as the gospels respectively, *according* to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Of course there can be no occasion to pursue the inquiry into the authenticity of the Christian scriptures, lower down than the fourth century.

1. *Though*, in that age, there was no established canon or authoritative declaration, that such and none other,

* By *all persons*, understanding strictly all *parsons*, for the common people were *nobody*, and never at any time had any voice, judgment, or option, in the business of religion, but always believed, that which their godfathers and godmothers did promise and vow that they should believe. God or devil, and any scriptures their masters pleased, were always all one to them.

than those which have come down to us, were the books which contained the Christian rule of faith.

2. And though "no manuscript of these writings now in existence is prior to the sixth century, and various readings which, as appears from the quotations of the Fathers, were in the text of the Greek Testament, are to be found in none of the manuscripts which are at present remaining."—*Michaelis*, vol. 2, p. 160.

3. And though many passages which are now found in these scriptures were not contained in any ancient copies whatever ;

4. And though "in our common editions of the Greek Testament, are MANY readings, which exist not in a single manuscript, but are founded on MERE CONJECTURE."—*Marsh's Michaelis*, vol 2, p. 496.

5. And though "it is notorious, that the orthodox charge the heretics with corrupting the text, and that the heretics recriminate upon the orthodox."—*Unitarian New Version*, p. 121.

6. And though "it is an undoubted fact, that the heretics were in the right in many points of criticism, where the Fathers accused them of wilful corruption."—*Bp. Marsh*, vol 2, p. 362.

7. And though "it is notorious, that forged writings under the names of the Apostles were in circulation almost from the apostolic age."—See 2 Thess. ii. 2, *quoted in Unitarian New Version*.*

8. And though "not long after Christ's ascension into heaven, several histories of his life and doctrines, full of pious frauds and fabulous wonders, were composed by persons whose intentions, perhaps, were not bad, but whose writings discovered the greatest superstition and ignorance."—*Mosheim*, vol. 1, p. 109.

9. And though, says the great Scaliger, "They put into their scriptures whatever they thought would serve their purpose."†

10. And though "notwithstanding those twelve known infallible and faithful judges of controversy (the twelve Apostles), there were as many and as damnable heresies crept in, even in the apostolic age, as in any other age,

* "Almost from the apostolic age!" Why the text itself, if it prove any thing, proves that such forged writings were in existence absolutely in the apostolic age, and among the apostles themselves.

† Omnia quæ Christianismo conducere putabant bibliis suis interseruerunt.—*Tindalio citante*.

perhaps, during the same space of time."—*Reeve's Preliminary Discourse to the Commonitory of Vincentius Lirinensis*, p. 190.

11. And though there were in the manuscripts of the New Testament, at the time of editing the last printed copies of the Greek text, upwards of ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY THOUSAND various readings."—*Unitarian New Version*, p. 22.

12. And though "the confusion unavoidable in these versions (the ancient Latin, from which all our European versions are derived), had arisen to such a height, that St. Jerome, in his Preface to the Gospels, complains that no one copy resembled another."—*Michaelis*, vol. 2. p. 119.

13. And though the gospels fatally contradict each other ; that is, in several important particulars, they do so to such an extent, as no ingenuity of supposition has yet been able to reconcile : only the most stupid and ignorant of Methodist parsons, and canting, arrogant fanatics, any longer attempting to reconcile them, after Marsh, Michaelis, and the most learned critics, have struck, and owned the conquest.*

14. And though the difference of character between the three first gospels, and that ascribed to St. John, is so flagrantly egregious, that the most learned Christian divines, and profoundest scholars, have frankly avowed that the Jesus Christ of St. John, is a wholly different character from the Jesus Christ of Matthew, Mark, and Luke ; and that their account and his should both be true, is flatly impossible.†

15. And though such was the idolatrous adulation paid to the authority of Origen, that emendations of the text which were but suggested by him, were taken in as part of the New Testament ; though he himself acknowledged that they were supported by the authority of no manuscript whatever.—*Marsh, in loco*.

16. And though, even, so late as the period of the Reformation, we have whole passages which have been thrust into the text, and thrust out, just as it served the turn which the Protestant tricksters had to serve.

* See Bishop Marsh's Surrender, quoted in chapter 17.

† Si forte accidisset, ut Johannis Evangelium per octodecim secula priora prorsus ignotum jacuisset, et nostris demum temporibus, in medium productum esset omnes haud dubie uno ore confiterentur Jesum a Johanne descriptum longe alium esse ac illum Matthæi, Marci, et Lucæ; nec utramque descriptionem simul veram esse posse.—*Carol. Theoph. Bretschneider Probab. Lipsiæ*, 1820.

17. And though we have on record the most indubitably historical evidence, of a general censure and correction of the Gospels having been made at Constantinople, in the year 506, by order of the emperor Anastasius.*

18. And though we have like unquestionable historical evidence, of measureless and inappreciable alterations of the same, having been made by our own Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, for the avowed purpose of *accommodating them to the faith of the orthodox.*†

19. And though there are other passages retained and circulated as part of the word of God, which are known and admitted by all parties to be wilful interpolations, and downright forgery and falsehood.

20. And though we see with our own eyes, and witness in our own experience—as per example, in the Athanasian Creed—that nothing could be so absurd, so false, so wicked, but that it would be retained and supported by our Christian clergy, on the selfsame principle as that on which they support all the rest on't,—even because it supports *them!*

Yet, after all, we shall find thousands of interested and aspiring pedants, pretending to reconcile what cannot be reconciled; to prove what cannot be proved, and to show *that* to be true, which every sense and faculty of man attests and demonstrates to be false. It is, however, on the ground of *inspiration*, that they ultimately rest their pretensions: it was on *that* ground that the Tower of Babel was built; *that* we leave them; but on the ground of history, criticism, reason, and natural evidence, they have no rest for the sole of their foot. I recommend them to treat us with contempt, and to send us to Coventry, and not to Oakham.

* Here it is. “Messala V. C. consulo, Constantinopoli, jubente Anastasio Imperatore, sancta evangelia, tanquam ab idiotis evangelistis composita, reprehenduntur et emendantur.”—*Victor Tununensis, Cave's Historia Literaria*, vol. 1. p. 415—i. e. “*The illustrious Messala being Consul; by the command of the Emperor Anastasius, the holy Gospels, as having been written by idiot evangelists, are censured and corrected.*”—Victor, Bishop of Tunis in Africa.

† See Beausobre, quoted in the Manifesto of the Christian Evidence Society; and this, and the preceding extract vindicated, in the author's Syntagma, against the vituperations of the evangelical Dr. John Pye Smith, *in locis*.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE ORIGIN OF OUR THREE FIRST CANONICAL GOSPELS.

THAT our three first canonical gospels have a remarkable similarity to each other ; and that the three first evangelists (*sc.* Matthew, Mark, and Luke) frequently agree, not only in relating the same things in the same manner, but likewise in the same words, is a fact of which every one must be convinced who has read a Greek Harmony of the Gospels. In some cases, all the Evangelists agree word for word, as thus :

MATTHEW, xxiv. 33.

Now learn a parable of the fig-tree ; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh : so likewise, ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

MARK, xiii. 20.

Now learn a parable of the fig-tree ; when her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near : so ye, in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily, I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

LUKE, xxi. 31.

Behold the fig-tree, and all the trees ; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your ownelves, that summer is now nigh at hand : so likewise, ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

These phænomena are inexplicable on any other than one of the two following suppositions, either that St. Matthew, St. Mark, and Saint Luke, copied from each other, or that all three drew from a common source.

In Mark xiii. 13 to 32, there is such a close verbal agreement, for twenty verses together, with the parallel passage in St. Matthew's gospel, that the texts of St. Matthew and St. Mark might pass for one and the same text.

“ The most eminent critics are at present decidedly of opinion that one of the two suppositions must necessarily be adopted—either that the three evangelists copied from each other, or that all the three drew from a common source, and that the notion of an absolute independence, in respect to the composition of our three first gospels, is no longer tenable. Yet the question, which of these two

suppositions ought to be adopted in preference to the other, is still in agitation ; and each of them has such able advocates, that if we were guided by the authority of names, the decision would be extremely difficult.”*

Difficult as the decision may be ; to the great end of this general view of the evidence affecting the claims of divine revelation, it is utterly indifferent ; since either alternative affords results equally conclusive, and equally militant against the character of those through whose hands these writings have come down to us. In either alternative, they are *not original* writings ; they are *not what they purport to be* ; and the writers stand convicted, at least, of negative imposture, (if indeed the imposture is attributable to them,) in passing their compositions off as original, and attempting to conceal from us the help they borrowed from each other, or what the common source was from which they each of them drew.

Le Clerc, in his *Historia Critica*, published at Amsterdam, A. D. 1716, seems to have been the first among modern divines who ventured to put forth the startling supposition that these three gospels were in part derived from either similar or the self-same sources.†

This opinion lay dormant upwards of sixty years, till it was revived by Michaelis, in the third edition of his *Introduction*, published 1777. Dr. Semler, however, was the first writer who made it known to the public that our three first evangelists used in common a Hebrew or Syriac document or documents, from which they derived the principal materials of their history ; in a treatise published at Halle, in 1783 ; but he has delivered it only in a cursory manner ; and as the thought was then new, he does not appear to have had any very determinate opinion on the subject. The probability is, that he *dared* not at that time have ventured to put forth a determinate opinion on the subject. We find Bishop Marsh himself, even in this learned dissertation, the highest authority I could adduce on the subject, confessing “ that the easiest and the most prudent part that he could take, would be merely to relate the opinions of others, without hazarding an opinion of his own.” There was little fear that so high a dignitary of the church would, for any opinion he might hazard, be liable to be dealt with as an humbler heretic of his com-

* Bishop Marsh's *Michaelis*, vol. 3, part 2, p. 170.

† Quidni credamus tria hæc evangelia partim petita esse ex similibus, aut fidei fontibus.—*Le Clerc, Hist. Crit. in loco.*

LESSING'S HYPOTHESIS.

But it was in the year 1784, in the posthumous works of *Lessing*, published at Berlin, that the hypothesis of a common Syriac or Chaldee origin was decidedly maintained, and put forth to the world with much more precision than the fortitude of Semler had ventured. Lessing was dead first. It is not from living authors, or from those who wish to live, that the world has to look for important discoveries in theology. Those who offer truth to the Christian community, must ever provide for their escape from the consequences of doing so.

NIEMEYER'S HYPOTHESIS.

Six years afterwards (in 1790), the important truth was taken up, and allowed to be spoken, in consequence of meeting the approbation of Dr. Niemeyer, Professor of Divinity in Halle, who, in his *Conjectures in illustration of the Silence of most of the Writers of the New Testament, concerning the beginning of the Life of Jesus Christ*, says, that "If credit be due to the authority of the Fathers, there existed a most ancient narration of the life of Jesus Christ, written especially for those inhabitants of Palestine who became Christians from among the Jews."*—"This narrative is distinguished by various names, as the GOSPEL of the Twelve Apostles—the GOSPEL of the Hebrews—the GOSPEL according to Matthew—the GOSPEL of the Nazarenes; and this same, unless all things deceive me, is to be considered as the fountain from which other writings of this sort have derived their origin, as streams from the spring."†

Dr. Niemeyer further adds, in a passage to which Bishop Marsh invokes our especial attention, that ‡ "Since this book of which we speak contained the

* Jam si fides habenda est patrum auctoritate antiquissima extitit de vita Jesu Christi narratio, in usum eorum, qui e Judæis Christiani facti erant, Palestinensium imprimis scripta.

† Hæc narratio variis nominibus insignitur, quo pertinent Evangelium duodecim Apostolorum, Hebræorum, Nazaræorum, secundum Matthæum: eademque, nisi me omnia fallant, pro fonte habenda est, e quo reliqua id genus scripta tanquam rivuli originem suam duxerunt.

‡ Cum vero contineret hic liber, de quo quærimus Apostolorum de vita Christi narrationes, non modo propter argumenti gravitatem credibile est, ejus exemplaria in plurimorum christianorum manibus fuisse, quorum maxime debabat interesse divinam magistri sui imaginem intueri, verum etiam singulis exemplaribus ea, quæ quisque aliunde de Christo comperta haberet, tanquam auctaria adscripta esse: ita quidem ut vel Apostolorum sæpe, plures extiterunt horum memorabilium recensiones.

Quod si sumitur; multa facillime explicari possunt, quæ, sublata ista hypo-

arrangement from Matthew? That many things should be wanting in Mark, that are readily to be met with in Matthew, whose steps he seems to follow? That in particular parts, one should be found more wordy than the other; in observing minute circumstances more diligent?—Why! Because as we have said, there really was a wonderful diversity in the copies which contained those MEMOIRS OF THE APOSTLES: and, secondly, because it was optionable for those who composed their gospels, out of those commentaries, to *add* whatever they knew of the matter from other sources, and to *cut off* whatever they considered to be of equivocal credibility, or less useful to readers and aliene from their object in writing.”

THE QUESTION PROPOSED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF GOTTINGEN, A. D. 1793.

In 1793, the theological faculty at Gottingen, proposed for the prize dissertation the question;—*What was the origin of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? From what fountains did the authors of those gospels draw? For what readers in particular, and with what aim did they each write, and how, and at what time came it to pass, that those four gospels acquired a greater authority, than that of the gospels which are called apocryphal; and became canonical.*” The prize was adjudged to Mr. Halfeld, who maintained that the Evangelists extracted their gospels from different documents. For proposing a similar question in London, in the year 1828, the author of this DIEGESIS obtained the prize, of a year's imprisonment, in Oakham Gaol, in the County of Rutland.

DR. EICHHORN'S HYPOTHESIS.

In his dissertation, *On the Origin of our Three First Gospels*, printed in 1794, in the fifth volume of his Universal Library, of Biblical Literature,* by far the most important of all the Essays which have appeared on this subject, Dr. Eichhorn, supposes that only *one* document was used, by *all three* Evangelists, but he supposes that various additions, had been made in various copies of it, and that three different copies, thus variously enriched, were respectively used by our three first Evangelists, *independently*

* The German title is Allgemeine Bibliothek der Biblischen Literatur; a periodical publication.

of all. This, the Nazarenes pretended, was the original from which that of St. Matthew was taken. It began with these words—" *It happened in the days of Herod.*"

"It appears from the fragments of it which have been preserved to us, that it contained no heresy, and that with the exception of some circumstances, the history of our Lord, was therein faithfully related. It is in this Gospel that we read the history of the woman taken in adultery, which is told in the 8th chapter of St. John; and since this was not contained in many copies of this latter gospel, some persons have conjectured that it was taken out of the Gospel of the Nazarenes, and inserted in that of St. John. If this be true, it is a testimony which the ancients have rendered to the Gospel of the Nazarenes: and if this history was originally contained in St. John's Gospel, it is another proof of the truth of their gospel.

"That which has been called THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE EGYPTIANS, is of the same antiquity. Origen has mentioned it; *Clemens Alexandrinus* had previously quoted it in several places; and if the second epistle of *Clemens Romanus* be authentic, this Gospel would have a testimony even yet more ancient than that of those two doctors. There is also, in the *Library of the Fathers*, a commentary on St. Luke, attributed to Titus of Bostra, in which this

c'est un temoignage que les Anciens rendent à l'Evangile des Nazaréens; et si cette histoire a été originairement dans S. Jean, c'est une autre preuve de la vérité de leur Evangile.

Celui, que l'on a nommé selon les Egyptiens est de la même antiquité, Origen en a fait mention. *Clement* d'Alexandrie l'avoit déjà allégué en quelques endroits. Et si la Seconde Epître de *Clement* Romain est de lui, cet Evangile auroit un témoignage plus ancien que celui de ces deux Docteurs. On a aussi, dans la Bibliothèque des Pères, un Commentaire sur S. Luc qu'on attribue à Tite de Bostres, dans lequel cet Evêque semble mettre l'Evangile selon les Egyptiens au rang de ceux que S. Luc a indiqués, et par conséquent antérieurs au sien. Comme les Encratites le citoient pour défendre leur Erreur sur le Mariage, les Bêres n'en ont point rejeté absolument les témoignages. Ils ont tâché de les expliquer dans un sens orthodoxe; ce qui montre, que ce Livre avoit une sorte d'autorité, et qu'on ne le soupçonnoit pas même d'avoir été supposé par des Hérétiques. Quand j'ai considéré, qu'il étoit reçu par les Chrétiens d'Egypte, je n'ai pu me défendre de la pensée, qu'il avoit été écrit par des Esséniens, qui avoient crû en J. Christ. La Religion de ces Gens là tenoient beaucoup de la Religion Chrétienne. L'Evangile des Egyptiens étoit plein de mystique, de paraboles, d'énigmes, d'allégories. On attribue cela à l'esprit de la Nation; pour moi, je l'attribuerois plutôt à l'esprit des *Esséniens*. On y trouvoit des sentences, qui paroissent favoriser l'Encratisme. Or les Esséniens vivoient dans la continence, et dans l'abstinence. Il est donc bien vraisemblable, que des personnes de cette Secte, Judaïque, la seule que J. Christ n'ait jamais censurée, s'attachèrent au Fils de Dieu, le suivirent; et que, s'étant retirés en Egypte après sa mort, ils y composèrent une Histoire de sa Vie et de sa Doctrine, qui parut en Egypte, et qui fut appelée à cause de cela, l'Evangile selon les Egyptiens."—*Beausob, Manich.* Tom. 1, p. 455, 456.

bishop seems to place the *Gospel according to the Egyptians* in the rank of those which St. Luke had investigated, and which consequently were anterior to his. Since the Encratites (*abstemious monks, Therapeuts*) quoted it to defend their error concerning marriage, the priests have not altogether rejected its testimonies. They have endeavoured to explain it in an orthodox sense ; which shows that this book had a sort of authority, and that they never even suspected that it had been foisted in by heretics. Upon considering (*the unquestionable fact*) that it was received by the Christians of Egypt, I have not been able to hinder myself from thinking, that it was written by the Essenes, who had believed in Jesus Christ. The religion of this people contained a great deal of the Christian religion. The *Gospel according to the EGYPTIANS* was full of mysticism, parables, enigmas and allegories : this has been attributed to the spirit of the nation ; for my part, I impute it rather to the Essenian cast of character. There may be found therein sentences which seemed to favour Encratism (*Monkery.*) Now, the Essenians lived in continence and abstinence ; it is, then, very probable, that persons of this Jewish sect, the only one which Jesus Christ never found fault with, attached themselves to the Son of God, followed him, and upon retiring into Egypt after his death, there, composed a history of his life and doctrine, which appeared first in Egypt, and which on that account was called the *Gospel according to the EGYPTIANS.*"

Thus far the most eminent, ingenuous and learned of French divines, *Beausobre*.* Let the reader take with him the light of this great critic's admission, quoted page 58, and of his knowledge of the Essenes and Therapeuts, established in our seventh chapter, thereupon following ; and cast up the results. He will find that the history of ages so "long ago betid," never gave to any fact whatever a higher degree of certainty,—than the certainty, that this Egyptian Gospel was the *DIEGESIS*, or first type, from which our four Gospels are mere plagiarisms ; and that it contained the whole story of Jesus Christ, and the general rule of faith professed by a set of Egyptian monks, (from whatever sources those monks themselves had derived it,

* I particularly wish the reader to observe the superior honesty of *Beausobre* : he alone has the moral courage to utter the name of the original, from which our gospels are derived, the *GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE EGYPTIANS*. All the rest, aware of the mighty argument with which it teems, seem to say, "Take any shape but *that*, and our firm knees should never tremble !"

which we shall hereafter enquire,) many years, probably ages, before the period assigned to the birth of Christ. Consequently, the fallacy of the pretence of the real existence of such a personage in Palestine, and in or about the age of the emperor Augustus, is absolutely demonstrated.

BISHOP MARSH'S HYPOTHESIS.

Bishop Marsh, however, demonstrates that the hypothesis of a common Hebrew document, is incapable, in any shape whatever, of explaining the phenomena; and labours, as it became a bishop to do, to save the credit of divine inspiration, upon the perplexed hypothesis, which his indefatigable ingenuity has excogitated, and than which perhaps there is none more probable, that, "*St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, all three used different copies of some common document, which before any of our canonical Greek gospels existed, was known as the GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE HEBREWS, or the GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE TWELVE APOSTLES; a gospel, of which the ancients speak with great respect; or the GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE NAZARENES, or the GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW. The materials of which, our St. Matthew, who wrote in Hebrew, retained, in the language in which he found them, Hebrew, Chaldee or Syriac: but St. Mark and St. Luke, beside their copies of that original Hebrew, Chaldee, or Syriac document, used a Greek translation of it, which had been made before any of the additions, which our St. Matthew found in his Hebrew copy, had been inserted. Lastly, the person who translated St. Matthew's Hebrew copy of that original document into Greek, frequently derived assistance from the Greek Translation of St. Mark, where St. Mark had matter in common with St. Matthew; that is, to save his own trouble, he copied the Greek of St. Mark, instead of continuing his own translation, de novo, from Matthew's Hebrew transcript: and in those places, but in those places only, where St. Mark had no matter in common with St. Matthew, he frequently had recourse, with the same view, to the ready-made Greek of St. Luke's Gospel. But though the person who translated St. Matthew's particular Hebrew copy of the common Hebrew document into Greek, did compare and collate those two other gospels with his own, yet Matthew, Mark and Luke, had no knowledge of each other's gospels.*"

THE DIEGESIS.

This first or earlier draught of the life and history of Christ, is acknowledged by St. Luke, as the basis of the gospel story, and called the *DIEGESIS*, or Declaration,* that is, narrative of those things which are most surely believed among us. In the undistinguished manner of representing, his sense in our English text, it escapes observation, that, what is rendered A DECLARATION, &c. really is the title of the work, of which this gospel professes no more than to be “a setting forth in order,” or more methodical arrangement.

THE GNOMOLOGUE.

But besides this *DIEGESIS*, the common basis of the three first gospels, as of many others which many had taken in hand, to reduce and arrange into more consistent order, there existed also a *GNOMOLOGUE*,† or collection of precepts, parables, and discourses, which were supposed to have been delivered by Christ, at different times, and on different occasions; and this, in addition to the *Diegesis*, was a common authority to St. Matthew and St. Luke, though it seems to have been unknown to St. Mark.

Proceeding steadily upon our principle avowed in the motto of this work, which binds us to view all pretences to any thing out of nature, as a surrender of all the stress that is laid on so weak an argument; the reader will know at once in what sense he is to understand the bishop's struggle to bar off the conclusions to which he has thus far marshalled our way. Every step which is here supposed, he tells us, is perfectly consistent with the doctrine of inspiration, not indeed of *verbal* inspiration, but with that *sort* of inspiration, in which the Holy Ghost watched over the sacred compilers with so suspended a hand, as left them to the guidance of their own faculties, while they kept clear of error; and only interposed, when without this divine assistance, they would have been in danger of falling. “With such an inspiration, (continues this Right Reverend expositor of the divine mysteries,)

* Επειδηπερ πολλοι επιχειρησαν αναταξασθαι ΔΙΗΓΗΣΙΝ περι των πεπληροφορημενων εν ημιν πραγματος—εδοξε κα'μοι'.—Luke i. 1.

† Such a work seems to be designated under various titles in the Epistles of Paul, as the *Form of Sound Words*, the *Doctrine*, the *Words of our Lord Jesus Christ*, &c.—1 Tim. vi. 3. The *Doctrine According to Godliness*, &c.—See *Syntagma*, p 74.

the opinion that the Evangelists drew a great part of their materials from a written document, is perfectly consistent; for if that document contained any thing erroneous, they had the power of detecting and correcting it."

Such is a succinct but accurate view of Bishop Marsh's Dissertation on the Origin and Composition of the Three First Canonical Gospels, of 249 pages, appended to the third volume of his translation of Michaelis's Introduction, Edit. 2, London 1802.



CHAPTER XVII.

OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL IN PARTICULAR.

ALL ecclesiastical writers seem to have agreed in representing the gospel according to St. John, as written at some considerable length of time after the publication of the three other gospels, and generally with a view to confute the heresies of the Cerinthians, Sabians, and Gnostics, which had either previously existed, or had risen into a mischievous notoriety, since the publication of those gospels. He had read the three first gospels before he composed his own, and appears, says Bishop Marsh, to have corrected, though in a very delicate manner, the accounts given by his predecessors; which, if his predecessors were under such an inspiration of the holy spirit, as was sufficient to keep them clear of error, must indeed have required the greatest delicacy. The Bishop, however, has merited our forgiveness of this absurdity, by the frankness of his confession, that after all his attempts to reconcile the contradiction of St. John's account of the resurrection of Christ with that of Mark and Luke, "he has not been able to do it, in a manner satisfactory either to himself, or to any other impartial inquirer into truth." He concludes with even more than necessary caution, that "if it be true that there are passages in St. John's Gospel, which are at variance with the accounts given by the other Evangelists, we cannot hesitate to give the preference to St. John, who wrote last, and appears to have had an excellent memory."* Some persons have need of excellent memories.

* Vol. 3, p. 315.—Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it seems, had but indifferent memories, even with the Holy Ghost to jog 'em, and John's memory has corrected some of the Holy Ghost's blunders.

O Sant Esprit ! La voila ton ouvrage.

DR. SEMLER'S HYPOTHESIS.

Dr. Semler contends, that St. John wrote before the other three Evangelists, and the weight of his authority, which alone would give respectability to his criticism, seems to be seconded by the historical evidence of the existence of the heretical sects which St. John wrote to refute, long anterior to any date which Christians have ascribed to the three first gospels. An evangelist, who had seen the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and wished to second and support their authority, would hardly have committed himself in the egregious and irreconcilable contradictions which this gospel presents, when compared with those : and surely, no one can be ignorant that the Platonic and Pythagorean doctrines, which distinguish and characterize this gospel, existed several ages before the birth of Christ. Nor ought the strong arguments which the learned have adduced, in proof that Plato and Pythagoras themselves were both members of the Therapeutan society, or had derived their doctrines from the sacred writings of this sect, to be of little weight with us. The universal delusion of ecclesiastical history consists in ascribing a later date to earlier institutions, in representing that which was the origination, as the corruption of Christianity, and in bringing down the monkish and monastic epocha to any period below the second or third century, in order to keep the clue of the whole labyrinth out of sight, and to evade the clear solution of all the difficulties of the inquiry, which presents itself in the fact that Eusebius has attested, that the Therapeutan monks were Christians, many ages before the period assigned to the birth of Christ ; and that the *Diegesis* and *Gnomologue*, from which the Evangelists compiled their gospels, were writings which had for ages constituted the sacred scriptures of those Egyptian visionaries.

EVANSON.

The learned Evanson, who, though a Unitarian divine, professes himself to be a firm believer in revelation, and a disciple of Jesus Christ,* marks with triple notes of admiration his astonishment that the orthodox should

* In his *Work on the Dissonance of the Four Evangelists*, published 1792, p. 222.

receive gospels which so flatly contradict each other, as each equally true. And of the adorable miracle of turning water into wine, he observes, that coming in so very exceptionable a form, upon the testimony of so very exceptionable an historian, it is altogether as unworthy of belief as the fabulous Roman Catholic legend of St. Nicholas's chickens.

BRETSCHNEIDER.

Since Christian tolerance has endured these pregnant admissions against the claims of divine revelation, the sceptical world has been enriched by the *Probabilia* of Bretschneider, published at Leipsic 1820, in which that illustrious divine, compatibly with an equally sincere profession of faith in Christianity ; and what is in some views a much more important consideration, compatibly with keeping his divinity professorship, and presidency of a Protestant university ; has shown that the Jesus depicted in the fourth gospel is wholly out of keeping, and entirely a different sort of character from the Jesus of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and that it is utterly impossible that both descriptions could be true ; that this gospel contains no testimony of an independent historian, or of a witness to the things therein related, but is derived solely from some written or unwritten tradition ; and that its author was neither an inhabitant of Palestine, nor a Jew.*

This, however, is not more than may, from internal evidence, be argued against the other evangelists, or at least Matthew and Mark, whose writings betray so great an ignorance of the geography, statistics, and even language of Judea, as the most illiterate inhabitants of that country could by no possibility have fallen into—*exempli gratia*.

FALSEHOOD OF GOSPEL GEOGRAPHY.

1. “ *He came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis,*” (Mark vii. 31): when there were no coasts of Decapolis, nor was the name so much as known before the reign of the emperor Nero.

2. “ *He departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of*

* Jesus, quem depinxit, quantum evangelium, valde diversus est a Jesu in prioribus evangelis descripto—nec utraque descriptio simul vera esse protest—Evangelista, nec ea quæ facta esse tradidit, ipse videt, sed e traditione aut scripta aut non scripta, hausit—nec Palæstinensis nec Judæus fuit.—*Bretschneider in Ordine Argumentorum.*

Judea, beyond Jordan," (Matt. xix. 1): when the Jordan itself was the eastern boundary of Judea, and there were no coasts of Judea beyond it.*

3. "*But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea, in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee, and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene,*" (Matt. ii. 22): when—1. It was a son of Herod who reigned in his stead, in Galilee as well as in Judea, so that he could not be securer in one province than in the other; and when—2. It was impossible for him to have gone from Egypt to Nazareth, without travelling through the whole extent of Archelaus's kingdom, or making a peregrination through the deserts on the north and east of the Lake Asphaltites, and the country of Moab; and then, either crossing the Jordan into Samaria or the Lake of Gennesareth into Galilee, and from thence going to the city of Nazareth; which is no better geography, than if one should describe a person as *turning aside* from Cheapside into the parts of Yorkshire; and when—3. There were no prophets whatever, or certainly none that either Jew or Christian would allow to be prophets, who had prophesied that Jesus "*should be called a Nazarene;*" and when—4. It is not true (according to the subsequent history) that Jesus was ever called a Nazarene; and when—5. *Nazarene* was not a name derived from any place whatever, but from a ~~sect~~ of Egyptian monks, and was none other than of the same significance as *Essene* or *Therapeut*—a fact which throws further light on this monkish legend; and when—6. Had Jesus been a Jew, and derived his epitheton according to Jewish customs from the place of his birth, he would have been called, not Jesus of Nazareth, but Jesus of Bethlehem.

4. After Christ and the Devil had ended their forty days' familiarity in the wilderness, "*He departed into Galilee, and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast in the borders of Zabulon, and Nephthalim, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles,*" &c. (Matt. iv. 12, 13); when, to Esaias, or any inhabitant of Judea, the country *beyond* must be the

* Evanson, p. 169.

country *east* of the Jordan, (as Gaulonitis, or Galilee of the Gentiles, is well known to have been); whereas Capernaum was a city on the *western* side of the Lake of Genesareth, through which the Jordan flows.

5. "*He departed into Galilee, and leaving Nazareth, came and dwelt at Capernaum,*" (Matt. iv. 13): as if he imagined that the city Nazareth was not as properly in Galilee as Capernaum was; which is much such geographical accuracy, as if one should relate the travels of a hero, who departed into Middlesex, and leaving London, came and dwelt in Lombard-street.

FALSEHOOD OF GOSPEL DATES.

1. The principal indications of time occurring in the Gospels, are—

"*And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed; and this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.*"—Luke ii. 1, 2.

It happens however, awkwardly enough.

1st. That there is no mention in any ancient Roman or Greek historian, of any general taxing of people all over the world, or the whole Roman empire, in the time of Augustus, nor of any decree of the emperor for that purpose: and this is an event of such character and magnitude, as to exclude even the *possibility* of the Greek and Roman historians omitting to have mentioned it, had it ever really happened.

2dly. That *in those days*, that is, "when Jesus was born, in the days of Herod the king," Judea was not at that time a Roman province; and it is therefore absolutely impossible that there could have been any such taxing there, by any such decree, of any such Cæsar Augustus.

3dly. That Cyrenius was not Governor of Syria, till ten or twelve years after the time assigned as that of the birth of Christ.

4thly. That the whole passage is taken from one of those apochryphal gospels which were in full vogue long before this of St. Luke was written; some of which, by leaving *the times and seasons* entirely in the hand of God, represented that this taxing was first made when King Solomon was reigning in all his glory, so that Pontius Pilate and he were contemporary, which did well enough before the

its ordinary emphatic way of indicating a particular object by a repetition of the word ; as, *an ass*, “*even that which was the son*,” or foal, or had been born of an ass ; for two of the species.*

2. “*And he said unto them, Go wash in the pool of Siloam, which is by interpretation Sent*,” (John xix. 7) ;† which happens to be an interpretation which no Jewish writer could possibly have given : *SILoAM* signifying, not *Sent*, but the place of the sending forth of waters, that is, the sluice : to say nothing of the absurdity of representing the pool as sent to the man, instead of the man being sent to the pool : or of the absurdity of supposing that one who was blind, could see his way thither. Sure, here seems to have been a greater chance of the poor man’s getting his baptism than his conversion. This text has so puzzled the commentators, that they have endeavoured to get the words “*which is by interpretation, Sent*,” considered as a mere marginal note ; but the authority of the Codices attests them to be a part of the text itself. Whatever, then, be the credit due to the three first evangelists, the fourth may well be considered as neither better nor worse, and must stand or fall with them.



CHAPTER XVIII.

ULTIMATE RESULT.

SUCH errors as we have exemplified, and innumerable other such there are, in every one of the four gospels, can be accounted for on no suppositions congruous with the idea of their having been written either by any such per-

* Similar pleonasms, not without considerable beauty, are—

“God is not a man, that he should die, nor the son of man, that he should repent.”—Numb. xxiii. 19.

“Shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion.”—Numb. xxiii. 21.

“Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man, that thou so regardest him?”—Psalm.

† Chap. xix. 7. Ubi auctor vocem *Σιλωαμ* falso interpretatur per *ἀπεσταλμενος*, et ex errore *מִלֵּשׁ* missus, pronuntiavit *מִלֵּשׁ* *Emissio*, scil. aquarum Ejusmodi error vero, nec Joanni Apostolo, neque alii cuidam scriptori Judæo accidere potuisset. Codicum auctoritate prorsus genuina judicanda sunt ista verba.—*Bretschneider*.

sons, at any such time, or under any such circumstances, as have been generally assumed for them. But we may challenge the whole world's history to furnish, from a period of such remote antiquity, a coincidence of circumstantial evidence to prove any fact whatever, so strong, so concatenated, and so entirely responsive to all the claims of the phenomena, as the evidence here adduced, that the first types of the Gospel-story sprang from the Egyptian monks, and constituted the substance of the mystical romance, which they had modified from the Pagan mythology, in conformity to their professed and acknowledged Eclectic Philosophy, and imposed for antecedent ages on the ecclesiastical colonies, which had migrated from the mother church of Alexandria.

Thus, after Europe and all Christian communities have been for so many ages led to believe that in the four gospels they possessed the best translations that could be derived, in their several languages, from the original inspired text of immediate disciples and contemporaries of Christ ; it is at length admitted, that mankind have been and are egregiously deceived. 1. It is admitted, that these gospels were *not* written by the persons to whom they are ascribed ; 2. That Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, were only translators or copyists of previously existing documents ; 3. Composed by we know not *whom* ; 4. We know not *how* ; 5. We know not *where* ; 6. We know not *when* ; 7. And containing we know not *what*. The very first assertion in the title-page of our New Testament, in stating that it is translated from the original Greek, involves a fallacy ; since it is absolutely certain that the Greek, from which our translations were made, was well nigh as far from being original, as the translations themselves, and it is absolutely uncertain what the original was.

Irenæus indeed, the disciple of Polycarp, which Polycarp is said to have conversed with St. John, and who himself lived and wrote in the middle of the second century, is the first of all the Fathers who mentions the four evangelists by name. But if this testimony were as certainly unexceptionable, as it certainly is *not*—the being able to trace these scriptures so high or even higher than the second century, would be no relief to the difficulties of the evidence ; since the same testimony attests the *antecedent* prevalence of the heresies of the Marcionites, Ebion-

the conclusion must be endured. To attempt to resist that conclusion, is to resist truth itself; to be afraid to do justice to the arguments that may lead to that conclusion, is to surrender it, without resistance.

THE PAGANS

1. Apologised for all the apparent absurdities of their system, by pleading that nothing in it was to be understood according to the gross and revolting sense of the letter, but that the whole was to be explained conformably to a mystical allegorical meaning which conveyed the most sublime truths.

2. "For those who preside over the holy Scriptures, philosophise over them, and expound their literal sense by allegory."—*Eusebius, concerning the Therapeutan priests.*

CICERO.

Concerning the Pagan Augurs.

3. "No order of true religion passes over the law concerning the description of priests.

4. "For some have been instituted for the business of pacifying the Gods.

5. "To preside at sacred ceremonies.

6. "Others to interpret the predictions of the prophet.

7. "Not of the many, lest the number should be infinite."

8. "But that none beside the College should understand those predictions which had been publicly recognized.

THE CHRISTIANS

1. Use precisely the same argument in defence of their system, only denying the benefit of it, to their Pagan adversaries.

2. God also hath made us

able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit. (2 Corinth. 3, 6.)—Which things are an allegory. (4 Gal. 24.)—*St. Paul, concerning the Christian priests.*

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Concerning the Christian Bishops.

3. And God hath set some in the church—first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers.—1 Corinth. xii. 28.

4. O Lord spare thy people, and be not angry with us for ever.—*Liturgy.**

5. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge.—1 Corinth. xiv. 29.

6. And let one interpret.—1 Corinth. xiv. 27.

7. Let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course.—1 Corinth. xiv. 27.

8. Because it is given unto you (the College of Apostles) to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.—Matt. xiii. 11.

* This attribute of being angry for ever, is peculiar to the Christian God, and has become, in consequence, peculiarly characteristic of Christians.

CICERO.

9. "For augury, or the power of foretelling future events, is the greatest and most excellent thing in the republic, and naturally allied to authority.

10. "Nor do I thus think, because I am an augur myself; but because it is absolutely necessary for us to think so.

11. "For if the question be of legal right, what is greater than the power to put away from the highest governments, their right of holding counsels, and issuing decrees: or to abolish them when holden? What more awful, than for any thing undertaken, to be done away, if but one augur hath said otherwise.

12. "What more magnificent than to be able to decree, that the supreme governors should resign their magistracy? What more religious than to give or not to give the right of treating or transacting business with the people? What than to annul a law if it hath not been duly passed,—and for nothing that hath been done by the government, either at home or abroad, to be approved by any one, without their authority?—*De Legibus, lib. ii. 12.*"

NEW TESTAMENT.

9. For greater is he that prophesieth, than he that speaketh with tongues. Desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophecy. He that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification and exhortation, and comfort.—1 Corinth. xiv. 3.

10. Neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me.—1 Corinth. ix. 15.—Inasmuch as I am the apostles of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.—*Rom. xi. 13.*

11. Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints. Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?—1 Corinth. vi. 3.

If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican.—*Matt. xviii. 17.*

12. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.—*Matt. xvii. 18.*

What than to annul a law if it hath not been duly passed,—and for nothing that hath been done by the government, either at home or abroad, to be approved by any one, without their authority?—*De Legibus, lib. ii. 12.*"

* No wonder, then, that such a power was not allowed to be held in separation from the imperial dignity itself. The Jewish Messiah, or Christ, united in his own person the several offices of prophet, priest, and king. The figures of Romulus, the founder of Rome, represent him as clad in the trabea, a robe of state, which implied an *ecclesiastical* as well as a secular dignity. The *lituus*, or staff of augury in his hand, is still retained as the crosier of our Christian bishops. "This latter mark of distinction (the episcopal crosier) usually attends the representations of the heads of Julius Cæsar in old gems and medals, in signification that he was high-priest and king, by the same right as Romulus had been." *Bell's Pantheon in loco quo.* Augustus, Vespasian, Verus, &c. are in like manner accompanied with the insignia of augury. So sacred were these *holy orders*, that none who had once been a member of the sacred college, could ever be degrad-

PHILO.

13. "In addition to these circumstances, Philo describes the order of preferment among those who aspire to ecclesiastical ministrations, and the offices of the deacons, and the pre-eminency above all of the bishop."—See *chap.* 10.

NEW TESTAMENT.

13. To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons.—1 Philip. i.

For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree.

If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.—1 Timothy iii. 13.

ROYAL PRIESTS.

Among the ancient Greeks, the dignity of the priesthood was esteemed so great in most of their cities; and especially at Athens, as to be joined with that of the civil magistrate. Thus *Anius*, in Virgil, was king of Delos, and priest of Apollo.* In Egypt, the kings were *all* priests; and if any one who was not of the royal family, usurped the kingdom, he was obliged to be consecrated to the priesthood, before he could ascend the throne. At Sparta, the kings, immediately upon their promotion, took upon them the two priesthoods of the heavenly, and the Lacedemonian Jupiter; and all the sacrifices for the safety of the commonwealth, were offered by them only.

SUBORDINATE CLERGY.

Besides these royal priests, there were others taken from the body of the people, and consecrated to the service of religion. These were all accounted the ministers of the gods, and by them commissioned to dispense their favour to mankind. Whoever was admitted to this holy office, was obliged to be of the most exemplary and virtuous character. They were required to be upright in mind and pure in heart and life, as well as perfect (*απελεις*) in body: they were to live chastely and temperately, abstaining from those pleasures which were considered innocent in other men. After their admission into holy orders, though marriage was not altogether forbidden, they were obliged and expected to preserve the most rigid chastity.

ed: the commission of the greatest enormity was not held competent to effect their *indefeasible* sanctity of character, or to forfeit their title of *THE REVEREND*; which their descendants still retain, in a never-interrupted succession of inheritance from their Pagan ancestors.

* Rex Anius, Rex idem hominum, Phœbique Sacerdos.—*Virg. AEn.* 3, v. 80.

They endeavoured to weaken or overcome "all the sinful lusts of the flesh," by drinking the juice of hemlock, and by strewing the herb *agnus castus*, or *chaste lamb* under their bed clothes, which was believed to possess refrigerating qualities.

THE PRIESTS OF CYBELE

Who held the dignity of *Theotokos*, *Deipara*, or Mother of God, which has since been transferred to the Virgin Mary, so conscientiously cut themselves off from the faculty of sinful sensations, as to deserve the commendation of Christ himself—Matt. xix. 12; and to be imitated in so unequivocal a proof of sincere devotion, by the most learned and distinguished of Christian bishops, Origen, Melito, &c.

PARASITES OR DOMESTIC CHAPLAINS.

Another holy order of priests, was that of the *Parasiti*, or *Parasites*, whose office was to gather from the husbandmen, the corn that was to be set aside for the services of the ministry. It was at last an office of great honour; the *Parasites* being by the ancient laws reckoned among the chief magistrates. In every village of the Athenians, they maintained these priests at the public expense; but afterwards, to ease the commonwealth of this burden, the wealthier sort were obliged to entertain them at their own tables, whence the word parasite, in later times, has been put for a flatterer, who, for the sake of a dinner, conforms to every one's humour. This holy order of *Parasites*, is continued in our Christian Church, in precisely the same character and function, under the less invidious name of domestic chaplains, who, hanging about the establishment of princes and nobles, generally contrive to worm themselves into the most lucrative ecclesiastical benefices upon the well-known economy.

"Non misura est cutem nisi plena cruoris hirudo.*"

CONVERSION FROM PAGANISM TO CHRISTIANITY, BROUGHT ABOUT ENTIRELY BY A TRANSFER OF PROPERTY.

Notwithstanding the conversion of Constantine to the Christian faith, the title, the ensigns, and the preroga-

* The leech will not drop from your skin till it is full of blood.—*Horace*.

tives of sovereign pontiff were accepted without hesitation, by seven successive Christian emperors. Gratian was the first who refused the pontifical robe*, and threw off the badges of Paganism; for though he retained the title of Sovereign Pontiff, he performed no part of its functions.† From motives no doubt of the most disinterested piety, “this emperor seized the lands and endowments which had been allotted to maintain the priests and sacrifices of the ancient Paganism, and appropriated them to his own use.”‡ A. D. 382.

We have yet extant, and happily I have here on my table, the celebrated oration delivered by Julius Firmicius Maternus, to the Emperors Constantius and Constans, the sons and successors of Constantine the Great; calling on those holy Emperors, to seize all the remaining property of the professors of Paganism, which his father had spared, and thus by reducing them to beggary, to starve them into salvation.

“Take away, take away, in perfect security, (exclaims this disinterested Christian orator.) O! most holy emperors, take away all the ornaments of their temples. Let the fire of the mint, or the flames of the mines, melt down their gods. Seize upon all their wealthy endowments, and turn them to your own use and property.§ And O! most sacred emperors, it is absolutely necessary for you to revenge and punish this evil. You are commanded by the law of the Most High God, to persecute all sorts of idolatry with the utmost severity: hear and commend to your own sacred understandings, what God himself commands. He commands you not to spare your son, or your brother; he bids you plunge the avenging knife even into the heart of your wife that sleeps in your

* Gibbon, vol. 3, p. 499.

† Bell's Panth. vol. 1, p. 19.

‡ Lardner, vol. 4, p. 455.

§ Tollite, tollite securi, sacratissimi Imperatores, ornamenta templorum. Deos istos, aut monetæ ignis, aut metallorum coquat flamma. Donaria universa ad utilitatem vestram, dominiumque transferte, (p. 59.) Sed et vobis, Sacratissimi Imperatores, ad vindicandum et puniendum hoc malum necessitas imperatur, et hoc vobis Dei summi lege præcipitur, ut severitas vestra idolatriæ facinus omnifarium persequatur. Audite et commendate sanctis sensibus vestris quid de isto facinore Deus jubeat. Nec filio jubet parci, nec fratri, et per amatam conjugem quæ est in sinu tuo, gladium vindicem ducit: amicum quoque sublimi severitate persequitur, et ad discerpenda sacrilegorum corpora, omnis populus armatur. Integris etiam civitatibus, si in isto fuerint facinore deprehensæ, decernuntur excidia. Misericordiæ suæ vobis Sacratissimi Imperatores, Deus summus præmia pollicetur.—Facite itaque quod jubet, complete quod præcipit, (p. 63.) De Errore Prof. Rel.

But impious and unreasonable as it was held to be in Christian ears, it was not worse than of a piece with the extract which I here subjoin:—

“Does not the religion of the Romans come under the protection of the Roman laws? By what name shall we call an alienation of rights, which no laws or circumstances of things ever justified? Freed men receive legacies, nor are even slaves deprived of the privilege of receiving what is left to them by *will*—they are only the noble Vestals, and the attendants on the sacred rites upon which the public welfare depends, who are deprived of the privilege of receiving estates legally bequeathed to them. The Treasury detains the lands which were given to the Vestals and their officers by our dying progenitors. Do but consult your own generous minds, and you will not think that those things belong to the public, which you have already appropriated to the use of others. If length of time be of weight in matters of religion, surely we ought to preserve that faith which has subsisted for so many ages, and to follow our parents, who have so happily followed theirs. We ask for no other state of religion than that which secured the empire to your blessed Father, and gave him the happiness of a legitimate issue to succeed him. That blessed prince now looks down from heaven, and beholds the tears of the priests, and considers the breach of their privileges as a reflection upon himself.”*

The Holy Father and Bishop St. Ambrose, strenuously opposed this petition, and ingeniously argued from a text of scripture, which served to carry the point in *his* days, but which since has become apocryphal, and consequently is no longer to be found; but this it was, “all the earth belongeth unto the righteous,† but to the infidels not one penny,” (obelus):

Lardner is anxious to vindicate the disinterestedness of St. Ambrose, who opposed himself to this unreasonable remonstrance of “these poor blind benighted Pagans;” and puts in proof, the letter written to the Emperor Eugenius in the year 392, in which St. Ambrose declares, that “those revenues had not been taken away by *his* advice, only he had advised that when once they were taken away, they should not be given back again.” That’s Christian all over! as much as to say, “I’ll have nothing to do with thieving, but I’ll go your halves!”

* Citante in loco, Lardnero.

† “*The righteous* :” who could that be but the orthodox clergy!

CHAPTER XX.

ÆSCULAPIUS—JESUS CHRIST.

ÆSCULAPIUS.

MR. ADDISON'S versification of the prophecies which foretold the life and actions of Æsculapius, from the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid.

Once, as the sacred infant she surveyed,
The god was kindled in the raving maid* ;
And thus she uttered her prophetic tale,
“ Hail, great physician of the world !
all hail.
Hail mighty infant, who in years to come,
Shalt heal the nations, and defraud the tomb !
Swift be thy growth, thy triumphs unconfined,
Make kingdoms thicker, and increase mankind.
Thy daring art shall animate the dead,
And draw the thunder on thy guilty head ;
Then shalt thou die, but from the dark abode
Shalt rise victorious, and be twice a god.”

Reason at once rejects all ideas of prophecy, as being

* Ergo ubi fatidicos concepit mente furores
Incaluitque Deo, quem clausum pectore habebat
Aspicit infantem. Totique salutifer orbi
Cresce puer dixit, tibi se mortalia sæpe
Corpora debebunt : Animas tibi reddere adeptas
Fas erit. Idque semel Dīs Indignantibus auctor
Posse dare hoc iterum flammâ prohibere avitâ
Eque Deo corpus fies exanguis ; Deusque
Qui modo corpus eras, et bis tua fata novabis.

Ovid *Met. Lib. 2, lin. 640.*

JESUS CHRIST.

MR. POPE'S versification of the prophecies which foretold the life and actions of Jesus Christ, from the prophecies of Isaiah.

Ye nymphs of Solyma begin the song !
O thou my voice inspire,
That touched Isaiah's hallowed lips with fire,
Rapt into future times the bard begun—
A virgin shall conceive, a virgin bear a son,
Swift fly the years, and rise th' expected morn—
O spring to light, auspicious babe be born.
He from thick films shall purge the visual ray,
And on the sightless eyeball pour the day :
'Tis he, th' obstructed paths of sound shall clear,
And bid new music charm th' unfolding ear ;
The dumb shall sing, the lame his crutch forego,
And leap exulting like the bounding roe.

“ And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity. And she was a widow of about four-score and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in at that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him

“ Being honoured as a god in Phœnicia and Egypt, his worship passed into Greece, and was established first at Epidaurus, a city of Peloponnesus, bordering on the sea; where probably some colonies first settled: a circumstance sufficient to induce the Greeks to give out that this god was a native of Greece.”—*Bell's Pantheon*, p. 27.

Among the Greeks, it was believed that the god Apollo himself had represented Æsculapius as his son by a voice from the oracle (*Ibid.*): and it is a striking coincidence of fact, if it be no more than a coincidence, that we find the Christian Father, Eusebius, attempting to prove the divinity of Jesus Christ, from an answer given by the same oracle;* while the text of the Gospel of St. Matthew iii. 17, written certainly much later than those answers, runs, “ *Lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.*” By the mother side, Æsculapius was the son of Coronis, who had received the embraces of God, but for whom, unfortunately, the worshippers of her son have forgotten to claim the honour of perpetual virginity. To conceal her pregnancy from her parents, she went to Epidaurus, and was there delivered of a son, whom she exposed upon the Mount of Myrtles;† when Aristhenes,‡ the goatherd,§ in search of a goat and a dog missing from his fold, discovered the child, whom he would have carried to his home, had he not, in approaching to lift him up, perceived his head encircled with fiery rays,|| which made him to believe the child to be divine. The voice of fame soon published the birth of a miraculous infant; upon which the people flocked from all quarters to behold this heaven-born child.¶

It was believed that “ Æsculapius was so expert in medicine, as not only to cure the sick, but even to raise the dead.” Ovid says he did this by Hyppolitus (and Julius says the same of Tyndarus); that Pluto cited him before the tribunal of Jupiter, and complained that his

* Dem. Evan. quoted, translated and commented on, in the author's *Syntagma*, p. 116.

† *Mount of Myrtles*—why not Mount of Olives?

‡ *Aristhenes*—why not Joseph?

§ *Goatherd*—why not Shepherd?

|| Thus all Christian painters have depicted the infant Jesus.

¶ *Heaven-born child*.—
Equally applicable to Æsculapius as to Jesus, is the divine doggerel annexed,

{ Veiled in flesh, the Godhead, He—
Hail th' incarnate Deity !
Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more might die ;
Born to raise the sons of earth ;
Born to give them second birth !

taking with him Pericles of Lydia, who was also a philosopher and worthy of that name,* went to the temple of Æsculapius, intending to pray for the sick young woman to the god; for the city (Athens) was at that time blessed in him, and still enjoyed the undemolished temple of THE SAVIOUR. But while he was praying according to the ancient form,† a sudden change appeared in the damsel, and she immediately became convalescent; for THE SAVIOUR, as being God, easily healed her."

With respect to the miracles ascribed to Æsculapius, and continuing to be performed for so many ages by the efficacy of *faith in his name*. and in answer to prayers offered up in his temple; the power and influence of imagination, in producing changes in the animal economy to an indefinite extent, is well known to physicians; and, without intending any *injurious* imposture, the most benevolent and intelligent medical men at this day avail themselves of the patient's superstition, to aid and second the operations of medicine. A strongly excited expectation of relief will often produce such an improved tone of muscular action, and such a more vigorous flow of the animal spirits, as will be sufficient to throw off the obstructions in which the disease originated, and thus effect many extraordinary and otherwise unaccountable cures. A medical friend once succeeded in curing a poor man of chronic rheumatism, after he had followed the prescriptions of the ablest physicians without receiving the least benefit, by working upon his imagination to *make sure* of receiving a cure, by taking *seven* tea-spoonfuls of the decoction of a *brickbat* that should be found in a churchyard, the brickbat to be boiled for *seven* hours, in *seven* quarts of water; the essential conditions of the miracle being that its efficacy was *not to be doubted*; and the whole process to be kept an inviolable secret. This prescription he affected to translate out of the spider-leg text of a Greek folio. The cure was perfect. The primitive Christians were content never to call in question the miracles pretended by their Pagan

* I preserve so much of the original text as is essential to the proof of the matter before us:—

Ανηλθεις το ασκληπειον προσευξομενος τω θεω υπερ της καμνωσης. Και γαρ ηντυχαι τότε η πολις τοτε και ειχεν επι απορρητον το το Σωτηρος ιερον. Ευχομενη αυτη τον αρχαιοτερον τροπον, αθροα μεταβολη παρι την κορην εφαινετο, και ραστωνη εξαιφνης εγγινετο. Ρεια γαρ ο Σωτηρ ωστε θεος ιασατο.—Quoted in Lardner, vol. 4, p. 410.

† The ancient form, forsitan; "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," &c.

were the evidence of his divinity, for ages before similar pretences were advanced for Jesus of Nazareth. "Strabo informs us, that the temples of Æsculapius were constantly filled with the sick, imploring the help of God; and that they had tables hanging around them, in which all the miraculous cures were described. There is a remarkable fragment of one of these tables still extant, and exhibited by Gruter in his collection, as it was found in the ruins of Æsculapius's temple, in the island of the Tyber in Rome; which gives an account of two blind men restored to sight by Æsculapius, in the open view, and with the loud acclamations of the people acknowledging the manifest power of the god."—*Middleton's Free Inquiry*, p. 78. Could such a document be produced to authenticate any one of the miracles ascribed to Jesus, what would become of the cause of infidelity?



CHAPTER XXI.

HERCULES—JESUS CHRIST.

OR Alcides, was the son of God by Alcmena, wife of Amphytrion, king of Thebes, and is said to have been born in that city, 1280 years before the Christian era. HERCULES was pointed out by the ancients as their great exemplar of virtue. It was affirmed by some, that he voluntarily engaged in his great labours. The whole of his life appears to have been devoted to the good of mankind. "The writers who treat of his adventures, and of the antiquities relating to them," says Mr. Spence, "have generally fallen into a great deal of confusion, so far, that I scarcely know any one of them that has perfectly well settled which were his twelve labours. To avoid falling into the same confusion, one may divide all his adventures into three classes. In the first class, I should place such as are previous to his twelve celebrated labours;

"In the second, those twelve labours themselves, which he was obliged to do by the fatality of his birth;

"And in the third, any supernumerary exploits.

"His first exploit was that of strangling two serpents sent to destroy him in his cradle. This he seems to have performed, according to some accounts of it, when he was not above half an hour old. But what is still more extraordinary is, that there are exploits supposed to have been performed by Hercules, even before Alcmena brought him into the world."

those he dealt with, he had been defrauded and injured in every nation of professed Christians.”*

The gaoler of the prison in which I am at the time of writing this, in the seventh month of an unjust captivity incurred by the conscientious and honourable maintenance of my sincere convictions, informs me, that during his own long residence in Malta, and constant course of commercial transactions with the professors of the Mohamedan creed, he never heard of an unpaid debt, or a violated obligation; and that it is an usual mode of traffic in the market-towns throughout Turkey, for the farmers and huxters to leave their fowls, eggs and butter, &c. in baskets, with the prices affixed, and to return in the evening in perfect security of finding the article as they left it, or the exact price deposited in the place of just so much of it as had found a purchaser.

“Were a wise man,” says Bishop Kidder, “to choose his religion by the lives of those who profess it, perhaps Christianity would be the last religion he would choose.” Christianity, then, has no pretence to evidence on the score of any moral effects it has produced in the world.



CHAPTER XXII.

ADONIS—JESUS CHRIST.

THE Jews had a superstition of not uttering the incommunicable name of God, יהוה—that is, *Yahou*, or *Jackhou*; or, as it frequently occurs, in one syllable, יה—*Jao*, or *Jack*;† which, with more reverence than reason, is pronounced *Jah*! as the tetragrammaton, or word of four letters, which at this day adorns our Christian temples is called *Jehovah*.

From this divine name יה, says Parkhurst, the ancient Greeks had their *I* in their invocations of the gods, more

* There are no *Quakers* among them; and there can be no villany where *Quakers* are not.

† The nearest approach to the exact pronunciation of this sacred word will be produced by suspending the action of all the organs of articulation, and making only that convulsive heave of the larynx, by which the bronchial vessels discharge the accumulated phlegm; it is enunciated with the most eloquent propriety in the act of vomiting, and perhaps on this account has been called the *unutterable* name.—Consult Rabbi Ben Herschel, and his beard! The God *JEHOVAH*, the most hideous of the whole mythology, was well known to the Gentiles; he was the *JOHN* of the ancient Tuscans, and Latinized into the *JANUS* of the Romans.

particularly of the god Apollo, i. e. *The Light*. And hence these two letters, forming the name *Jah*, written after the Oriental manner, from right to left, were inscribed over the great door of the temple of Apollo at Delphi.

יה is several times joined with the name יהוה, which seems to indicate that they are distinct names for the same deity, and not the one the mere abbreviation of the other. The rays of light or glory within a circle or ring of which the tetragrammaton, or four-lettered word, is exhibited in our Christian temples, are a demonstration that the same deity is intended by the Christian Jehovah as by the Pagan *Jah* (that is, Apollo), whose name of two letters was in like manner encircled with rays of glory.

The Pagans, indeed, seem more rigidly to have adhered to the text or injunctions of those Syrio-Phœnician odes which have been consecrated by Christian piety, under the name of the Psalms of David, and which formed a material part of their idolatrous liturgies, than their Christian plagiarists who have retained the use of them in a never-interrupted succession from their times.

We read in the original, the hundred times repeated commands, הללו יה—*Ellell-lu-jah ! praise ye Jack !* חנה ברכו אה יה—*Behold ! bless ye Jack !*

שירו לאלהים ומח שמו סלו לרכב בערכות ביה שמו ועלו לפניו כי אה
אפיס יהוה כי לעולם חסדו—

Sing ye to the gods ! Chant ye his name ! Exalt him who rideth in the heavens, by his name Jack, and leap for joy before his face ! For the Lord hath a long nose, and his mercy endureth for ever !

It is admitted, however, on all hands, that the proper pronunciation of the tetragrammaton which we call Jehovah, and its synonyme *Jah*, is entirely lost. Nor can it be denied, that the Hebrew points ordinarily annexed to the consonants of those words, are not the natural points belonging thereto, nor indicative of pronunciation; but are the vowel points belonging to the words ADONAI and ELOHIM,—to warn the reader, that instead of the word JEHOVAH, which the Jews were forbidden to pronounce, and the pronunciation of which had been long unknown to them, they are always to read Adonai, or Adonis.*

* See the Oxford Encyclopædia, under the head *Adonists*; and my own further investigations of this curious subject, in my Syntagma of the Evidences of the Christian Religion, published during the earlier months of my still continuing

Hence we find, that frequently where the common printed copies read אֲדֹנִי, many of Dr. Kennicott's codices have אֱלֹהִים. And hence, says Dr. Parkhurst, whose orthodoxy of Christian faith admits not a suspicion—hence the idol *Adonis* had his name.*

The reader will, I hope, do himself the justice to observe, that throughout this *DIEGESIS*, no merely fanciful or conjectural interpretations are admitted, and no new lights struck out from ingenious etymologies: he is here presented with the calm dispassionate evidence of fact, and when those facts are most pregnant of conclusions adverse to Christianity, they are invariably adduced in the words and on the authority of Christians themselves, whose disinterestedness, at least, in yielding admissions of this character, is no more to be questioned, than their learning and piety to be surpassed.

The great source of difficulty and mistake in tracing the identity of the parent figment through the multifarious forms of the ancient idolatry, seems to arise from the change of epithets and names, while yet it is but one and the same deity and demi-god who is meant under a hundred designations. Thus, the names under which the Sun has been the real and only intended object of divine worship, have been as various and as many as the nations of the earth on which his light has shone. And as various are the allegories and fictions of his passing through the zodiacal sign of the Virgin, which, of course, would remain a virgin still; his descending into the lower parts of the earth; his rising again from the dead; his ascending into heaven, his opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers; his casting his bright beams of light through twelve months, or Apostles, one of whom (February—Judas) lost a day, and *by transgression* (or skipping over) "*fell, that he might go to his own place,*" (Acts i. 25); "*his preaching the acceptable year of the Lord,*" (Luke iv. 9). By all which metaphorical personifications, were typified the natural history or circumstances observable in the Sun's progress through the twelve months which constitute the natural year.

The Jews in vain endeavour to disguise the fact, that *they* also were Sun worshippers. We find, from their own sacred books, that their Solomon, after having built a

unjust imprisonment, for the conscientious exposure of the errors and ignorance on which that religion is founded. p. 96.

* Parkhurst's Hebrew Lexicon, under the head אֲדֹנִי.

proofs that could be adduced from the admission of an adversary of the resurrection of Christ.*

"But thou at least," says Eusebius, "listen to thine own Gods, to thy oracular deities themselves, who have borne witness, and ascribed to our Saviour, not imposture, but piety and wisdom, and ascent into heaven."

Quoted in the author's Syntagma, p. 116. This was vastly obliging and liberal of the God Apollo; only, it happens awkwardly enough, that the whole work, (consisting of several books) ascribed to Porphyry, in which this and other admissions equally honourable to the evidences of the Christian religion, are made, was not written by Porphyry, but is altogether the pious forgery of Christian hands; who have kindly fathered the great philosopher with admissions, which as he would certainly never have made them himself, they have very charitably made for him.

But not alone the very name Adon, or Adonai, nor the particular manner in which that God was worshipped, occurring as frequently as the name Jehovah, and by the Jews themselves constantly maintained to be the sense of that name, and proper to be used rather than, and instead of it; but the distinctive *attributes* of Adonis, the peculiarly characteristical epithets and designations by which that idol was identified from all others, prove beyond the possibility of doubt, that the Jews were worshippers of the self-same *Adonis*, adored by their Phœnician neighbours. Adonis was distinguished for his personal beauty. We find entire odes or psalms in praise of his beauty,† and his characteristic epithet of THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS used interchangeably, instead of his name. "*He appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS.*"—2 Chron. xx. 21.

"The Devil," says Firmicius, "has his Christs,"‡ of which he affects not to deny that this Adonis was one. But one of the strongest sensible proofs of the difference between the false Christs and the true one, which this

* Firmicius, quotes this Christian forgery under the title *Περὶ τῆς εὐλογίας φιλοσοφίας*.—Eusebius, avails himself of it, as *Περὶ λογίων φιλοσοφίας*.—Macknight and Doddridge strove mightily to enlist it into the service of the Church Militant; but it would not do.

† פִּיפִית מְבִנִי אִם הוּצָק חֵן בְּשִׁפְתוֹתָי עַל כֵּן בָּרַךְ אֱלֹהִים לְעוֹלָם

Thou art handsome, beyond the sons of Adam, love is diffused in thy lips, for the sake of which, God is enamoured of thee for ever.—Psalm 45.

‡ Habet ergo Diabolus Christos suos, p. 46.

gent from this state of the Christian evidences—1. What argument can be drawn from the wonderful propagation of the Gospel, when in the city where it was at first most successfully preached, and where the disciples were first *called* Christians, it had not, even in the fourth century, abolished the Pagan and idolatrous festival of the Adonia?—2. And wherefore should the arrival of the emperor Julian (a known apostate from the Christian religion, and a zealous patron of Paganism), during the celebration of the Adonia, have been considered as an ill omen, but that the Adonia had come to be considered as entirely a *Christian festival*?—3. And at what time, or whether ever, the festival of the Adonia was distinctly abolished, and that of the Christian Easter established upon its overthrow?

For the solution of these most important inquiries, we hold up the light of the admissions of ecclesiastical historians. It must ever be borne in mind, that the Christians of the second, third, and fourth centuries industriously laboured to give their religion the nearest possible resemblance to the ancient Paganism; and confessedly adopted the liturgies, rites, ceremonies, and terms of heathenism; making it their boast that the Pagan religion, *properly explained*, really was nothing else than Christianity; that the best and wisest of its professors in all ages had been Christians all along; that Christianity was but a name more recently acquired to a religion which had previously existed, and had been known to the Greek philosophers, to Plato, Socrates, and Heraclitus; and that “if the writings of Cicero had been read as they ought to have been, there would have been no occasion for the Christian Scriptures.” Nor did some of them, who maintained that Jesus Christ had a real existence, hesitate to ascribe to him a work in which “he himself expressly declared that he was in no way opposed to the worship of the gods and goddesses;* while our most orthodox Christian divines, the best learned in ecclesiastical antiquity, and most entirely persuaded of the truth of the Christian religion, unable to resist or to conflict with the constraining demonstration of the *data* that prove the absolute sameness and identity of Paganism and Christianity; and unable to point out so much as one single idea or notion, of which they could show that it was *peculiar* to Christianity, or

*See the chapter of admissions in this *DIGEST*; and Jones on the Canon, vol. 1. p. 12.

that Christianity had it, and Paganism had it not; have invented the apology of an hypothesis; that the Pagan religion, like the Jewish dispensation, was *typical*; and that Hercules, Adonis, &c. were all of them types and forerunners of the true and real Hercules, Adonis, &c. our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Nothing is more easily conceivable, than that the priests and devotees of any one of the innumerable forms of absurdity which superstition might from time to time assume, should decry all others, and pretend that their's alone was divine: nothing is so hard to be conceived, as that a God of infinite wisdom and truth should be the author of a religion so little superior, and so closely resembling the devices of juggling priests and self-interested impostors, that it should not be in the power of any man on earth, who would judge impartially, to discover in what the superiority consists; or that there was really any difference at all between them.



CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MYSTICAL SACRIFICE OF THE PHœNICIANS.

"It was an established custom among the ancient Phœnicians, on any calamitous or dangerous emergency, for the ruler of the state to offer up, in prevention of the general ruin, the most dearly-beloved of his children, as a ransom to divert the divine vengeance. They who were devoted for this purpose, were offered *mystically*, in consequence of an example which had been set this people by the God Kronus, who, in a time of distress, offered up his only son to his father Ouranus. The mystical sacrifice of the Phœnicians had these requisites: 1st. That a prince was to offer it; 2nd. That his only son was to be the victim; 3rd. That he was to make this grand sacrifice invested with the emblems of royalty."—*Bryant's Observations on Ancient History*, quoted in *Archbishop Magee's Work on the Atonement*, vol. 1, p. 388. This is the Archbishop of Dublin, whose spirit, temper, and conduct are so strikingly in harmony with those he ascribes to a God delighting in blood and bloody sacrifices, famous for his inexorable severity in the government of his diocese, and his cruel treatment of the inferior clergy; nor less distinguished for

the convenient flexibility of his own orthodoxy. He is known in private to laugh at the folly of his own doctrines, as in public he ventured to declare, that though he believed in the Articles of the Church of England collectively, he did not believe in them separately.

Here is, in fact, a first draft of the whole Christian scheme, existing in a country neighbouring on Judea, many hundreds of years before it became moulded into its present shape.

Jesus Christ, the son of a king, is offered by God to himself, to avert his own vengeance, and this is repeatedly called the *mystery of the Gospel*, (Col. i. 26). Had the Gospel been matter of fact, there could have been no *mystery* in it.

“And they put on him a scarlet robe.” Matt. xxvii. 28.

“And they clothed him with purple.” Mark xv. 17.

“And arrayed him in a gorgeous robe.” Luke xxiii. 11.

“And they put on him a purple robe.” John xix. 2.

And set up over his head, his accusation, written—

“THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE
JEW.”

Matt. xxvii. 37.

“THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

Mark xv. 26.

“THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

Luke xxiii. 38.

“JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING
OF THE JEWS.”

John xix. 19.

Such a mockery of a dying malefactor, never, in any other instance, disgraced the judicial administration of a Roman magistrate.

The addition of the important words, *Jesus of Nazareth*, in the later Gospel of St. John, strongly indicates the intention of making the circumstances of a previously existing Gospel apply to a newly-invented name for the old hero.



CHAPTER XXIV.

CHRISHNA.

“THAT the name of CHRISHNA, and the general outline of his story,” says the pious and learned Sir William Jones, “were long anterior to the birth of our Saviour, and

terminated the position of the planets at that moment; which position was still preserved in some books to be found among the astronomers: besides which, there was mention made of his birth in the Harivansa, and other Puranas. These I examined, but found they were insufficient to point out the time;* I therefore directed my attention towards obtaining the JANAMPATRA of Krishna, containing the positions of the planets at his birth, which at length I was fortunate to meet with;† from which it appears that Chrishna was born on the 23d of the moon Sravana." The writer then gives the position of the planets at the birth of Krishna, and states that "they place the time of the fiction in the year A. D. 600, on the 7th of August, at midnight."—*Bentley on Ancient and Modern Hindu Astronomy*, quoted by Mr. Beard, in his 3rd Letter to the Author, p. 90.

Dr. Bentley is indeed a name of first-rate honour among Christian theologues, and is frequently appealed to as one of their highest authorities, "the learned Bentley," "the prince of critics," &c. The reader, however, cannot be better led to judge how he should appreciate this great man's decision, than by consulting the temper and spirit which appears in the annexed specimen of his manner of answering the objections of unbelievers, and which I find quoted by his zealous admirer:—"What a scheme would these men make? What worthy rules would they prescribe to Providence? And pray, to what great use or design? To give satisfaction to a few obstinate, untractable wretches; to those who are not convinced by Moses and the prophets, but want one to come from the dead and convert them! Such men mistake the methods of Providence, and the very fundamentals of religion, which draws its votaries by the cords of a man; by rational, ingenuous, and moral motives; not by conviction mathematical, not by new evidence miraculous, to silence every doubt and whim that impiety and folly can suggest. And yet all this would have no effect upon such spirits and dispositions. If they now believe not Christ and his Apostles, neither would they believe if their own schemes were complied with."—*Phileleutherus Lipsiensis*, p. 114.

The reader is here in full possession of the Christian argument. He must bear in mind, however, that the argument, as thus far stated, is entirely in Christian hands.

* Aye, to be sure! to be sure! they pointed the wrong way!

† O fortunate fellow! I'd have sworn he would have met with it!

Had we ventured to supply to these admissions, the further discoveries which unbelieving historians have made, we might have enriched our matter with the still more striking coincidence of the facts; that the reputed father of Chrishna was a *carpenter*, and that he was put to death at last *between two thieves*; after which, he arose from the dead, and returned again to his heavenly seat in Vaicontha; leaving the instructions contained in the Geeta to be preached through the continent of India by his disconsolate son, and disciple Arjun."

Tractable indeed, and easy of faith, must the adopters of Dr. Bentley's explanation of the matter be, who can suffer evidence of this character, yielded and supplied as it is, by authority as great as any they can pretend, and that authority too, entirely adverse to our deductions, to be swept away by *psalmistry*, by a calculation of the position of the planets; or defeated by a sagacious discovery of some chronological discrepancy, which Dr. Bentley, who was satisfied that it was there before he looked for it, found in the Janampatra.

The exquisite accuracy of the astrological demonstration, that Krishna was born on the 7th of August, A. D. 600, at midnight; can only be put on the same footing with the chronology of Julius Africanus, who has in like manner demonstrated that the world was made on the 1st of September, and was exactly five thousand five hundred and eight years, three months, and twenty-five days old at the birth of Christ.

The argument against the antiquity of the Hindu mythology, from the discovery that "a great many of its festivals, as now observed, agree with the modern astronomy only, and not with the ancient," is of no more validity, than if it were objected (as with equal truth it might be) that the time of celebrating our Christian festivals has in like manner been accommodated to more modern arrangements of our calendar, and agrees not with the ancient astronomy. When the Hindu astronomers at any time found it convenient to alter their calendar, it was surely as competent in them to make the times of celebrating their ancient festivals agree with their improved knowledge of astronomy; as it was for our Christian astronomers to alter the style, and to fix the celebration of Easter and Whitsuntide to different seasons of the year from those in which they had been observed for previous ages.

As for all the uncertainty with respect to the alleged time of the birth of Chrishna, there is but little ground for the advantage of Christians, who have never yet been able to fix the date of the day, or month, or even of the year of the birth of Christ.

“The year in which it happened,” says Mosheim,* “has not hitherto been fixed with certainty, notwithstanding the deep and laborious researches of the learned.” The learned John Albert Fabricius has collected all the opinions of the learned on the subject:† that which appears most probable is, that it happened about a year and six months before the death of Herod, in the year of Rome 748 or 749. “The uncertainty, however, of this point,” continues our great ecclesiastical historian, “is of no great consequence. We know that the Sun of Righteousness has shone upon the world; and although we cannot fix the precise period in which he arose, this will not preclude us from enjoying the direction and influence of his vital and salutary beams.”

This is the most unfortunate figure of speech (if it be no more than a figure of speech) that Christians could possibly resort to; since, instead of raising and exalting our ideas of the divine Saviour above all associations with the wild conceits of the heliolatry and idolatry of the heathen world, it brings us at once to the irresistible apprehension, that the Christian Saviour, after all, is no more than what the Æsculapius, Hercules, Adonis, Bacchus, Apollo, and Chrishna were; that is, an emblematical personification of the Sun.

“Colonel Valency,” says Sir William Jones, “assures me that Chrishna in Irish means the SUN.”—*Asiatic Researches*, vol. 1, p. 262.

The taking of the name of a *thing* in any unknown language for the name of a *person*, would naturally render these personifications infinite; and cause the natural history of *things without life* to be related or understood as if they had been real adventures of actually existing personages. Hence, have we actions and sufferings, sentiments and affections, and all that could be predicated of rational beings—predicated not only of animals, but of vegetables and inanimate substances, of the works of men’s hands, and even of the abstractions of their thoughts. The ship *Argo*, in which Jason and his companions sailed for the

* Ecclesiastical History, vol. 1, p. 58.

† In his *Bibliograph. Antiquar*, cap. 7, sect. 10, p. 187.

golden fleece, had its imaginary moral qualities ; it fought the waves, it suffered, it conquered, it was translated into heaven. The disposition of mind called *charity*, is described by St. Paul, under all the circumstances that could be imagined of a most accomplished and lovely woman : “ *She suffereth long, and is kind ; she doth not behave herself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked,*” &c. (1 Cor. xiii.); though nothing could be further from his intention, than that we should take *charity* to be a person who had a real existence, and fall to the folly of endeavouring to find out when she was born, under what king’s reign, and in what country, &c.; as it may be conjectured some have done with respect to other personifications, whose existence, actions and sufferings, were of an equally metaphorical and figurative origination. But if the identity of the mythological personages, Christ and Chrishna, and the absolute derivation of the Christian from the Hindu or Brahminical religion, might yet seem matter rather of curious excogitation, than of satisfactory proof ; the matter receives the utmost corroboration which any historical fact of such remote antiquity, could be conceived to have, from the entire discomfiture and overthrow of all attempts to evade the conclusion, which we achieve in the strength of further researches, later discoveries, and ampler concessions won from the conviction of the most intelligent of Christians themselves, who have dared to trust themselves with the important investigation.

We have become better acquainted with the evidences of the Christian religion than it was possible for the Lardners, Watsons, or Paleys to have been.—We have means of information which they had not.—We are in possession of intelligence, the result of more extensive research, of more impartial enquiry, and of more recent discoveries, of which they were absolutely ignorant.

No work whatever, of the divines of the now antiquated school of Christian-evidence writers, can be fairly adduced either as authority or argument, against the thousand-fold more formidable array of objections, which have emerged even within the last ten years, from the further concessions made by divines themselves, from the improved powers of reasoning, advanced science, extended knowledge, and greater moral courage of unbelievers, to bring up that science and knowledge to the conflict.

To pretend any longer that infidels insist only on argu-

ments that have already been answered, or refuted, is to discover the grossest ignorance of what their arguments really are, and in that ignorance to find the only excuse for what such a pretence really is,—the grossest falsehood.

To pretend to refer the anxious mind for the solution of its doubts to any defence of the Christian religion written earlier than the present century, is but parallel in absurdity to the setting a medical student of the present day to acquire his knowledge of chymistry and physic from the cumbrous folios of Paracelsus, Bombastus, or the Commentaries of Van Sweeten, Hippocrates, and Galen.

After the unmeasured abuse, and bitter vituperations which I have incurred for the prominence which I have given to this most pregnant argument, I find Godfrey Higgins, Esq. of Skellow Grange, Yorkshire, himself a very learned, ingenious* and sincere Christian, in his superb work on the Celtic Druids, published by R. Hunter, 1827, thus laying at our feet, the keys of the fortress, in the assault of which, I have taken such hard words, hard usage, and every thing that was hard, except hard arguments :—

“After Baillie, and some other learned astronomers had turned their attention to the ancient astronomical instruments, calculations and observations, of India, it was discovered that they proved the antiquity of the world to be so great, that what was called by our priests, the Mosaic system of chronology, could not be supported. Immediately upon this, they set every engine at work to counteract the effects of the recorded observations of the Hindus, by representing that they are, in fact, merely pretended observations founded on back-reckonings.

“Professor *Playfair* of Edinburgh, has given the most decisive proofs in the *Edinburgh Philosophical Transactions*,† that the Brahmins, to have made the back-reckonings, must have been well acquainted with the most refined of the theoretical improvements of modern astronomy. Instead of having forgot the principles of their formulæ,

* Mr. Higgins must forgive my hoping, that his false way of spelling *Chrishna* (which is certainly *Chrishna*, and not *Krishna*,) may not be an exception against his ingenuousness. It was very natural that he should endeavour to bring his Christ out of the scrape as well as he could, and save his Saviour ! But *Krishna*, or *Chrishna* is fatal to Christ, spell him e'en as you will !

† See Vol. 2, and Vol. 4.

they must have been much more learned than we know they were, and in fact than their ancestors ; indeed more learned than our modern astronomers were, until the astronomical theories of *Newton* were completed very lately, by the discoveries of some of the French philosophers."

"Near the city of Benares, in India, are the astronomical instruments cut out of the solid rock of a mountain, which in former times, were used for making the observations, which Sir William Jones and the priests say, were only back-reckonings. The Bramins of the present day, it is said, do not know the use of them ; they are of great size, and tradition states them to be of the most remote antiquity. If the astronomical facts stated in the works of the Bramins, be the effects of the back-reckonings, the Bramins of the present day are as ignorant of the formulæ on which they are grounded, as they are of the nature of the astronomical instruments. If they have become acquainted with them, it is by the instruction of Europeans."

"A gentleman, in the Asiatic Researches, has lately, by means of the most deeply learned and laborious calculations,* discovered that the history of Krishna, one of the most celebrated Gods of the Hindoos, was invented in the year of Christ six hundred ; and that the story was laid about the beginning of the Christian æra. This goes directly to overthrow all the Hindoo calculations. He has proved this as clear as the sun at noon ! He has absolutely demonstrated it ! but it is unfortunate for this *demonstration*, that the statue of this God is to be found in the very oldest caves and temples throughout all India, —temples, the inscriptions on which are in a language used previously to the Sanscrit, and now totally unknown to all mankind, any day to be seen amongst other places, in the city of Seringham, and the temple at Malvalipuram."

It has been moreover satisfactorially proved, on the authority of a passage of *Adrian*, that the worship of Krishna was practised in the time of Alexander the Great (330 years before Christ), at what still remains one of the most famous temples of India, the temple of Mathura, on the Jumna, the Matura Deorum of Ptolemy. So much for this astronomical *demonstration*."—*Celtic Druids*, pp. 154, 155, 156, 157.

* These "laborious calculations," are Dr. Bentley's wretched shifts to save Christianity.

“It seems the miraculously and stupendously learned Bentley, who was to put all the enemies of the Lord to silence, has reckoned without his host; and in discovering by help of the *Janampatra*, that, from a certain relative location of the planets, it would appear that Chrishna was born on the 7th of August, A. D. 600, at midnight; it happened most unfortunately for his learned wiseacreship, not to occur to him, that all these facts of the locations of the planets, are PERIODICAL—so that if he be right, that the time of the birth of Chrishna can be inferred from such a location and the circumstances attending it, (a thing in itself very doubtful); all that he will prove, will be, that the pretended birth of this God must have taken place, at a similar part of a period, some time before the war of Alexander the Great. And thus, if we know the length of the period or cycle referred to, we shall know the latest time at which this God was feigned to be born before the birth of Alexander.” Mr. Higgins informs us, that when our army, of Indian Seapoys arrived at Thebes in Egypt in the course of the French war, they discovered their favourite God Chrishna, and instantly fell to worshipping, (no doubt the cunning rogues of Bramins* came to Egypt in the year 600, and placed his statue amongst the ruins !”)

“I made every attempt my time would permit,” says Col. Fitzclarence, “to discover the celebrated figure which caused the Hindoos with the Indian contingent, to find fault with the natives of this country, for allowing a temple of Vishnou to fall to ruins; but did not succeed.”†

“I could say much more,” says Mr. Higgins, “on the subject of this temple at *Mathura*, for it is very curious—but I much prefer letting it alone !!!”—*Celtic Druids*, p. 157.

In the name of God, what means this *letting it alone*? Christians have to thank their persecuting City Aldermen, their prompt recourse to the arguments of stone and iron, their Dorchester and Oakham; that when really learned and intelligent men tread on the threshold of the most important discoveries, they much prefer “*letting it alone*,” and leaving us to guess, where we might certainly have known.

In this dilemma, we may guess with a conviction little short of certainty—that it was never a little that priests would boggle at—1. That the celebrated figure which Col. Fitzclarence was hindered from seeing, would have estab-

* This sarcasm is very severe, but it is from the pen of Christian Mr. Higgins, a believer in divine revelation.

† In his *Travels*, pp. 393, 394.

lished the absolute identity of the Indian Chrishna and the Egyptian Christ :

In confirmation of this *guess* (if it be no more), we have the further light of an admission from the Rev. Mr. Maurice, of the curious fact, that "the two principal pagodas of India, viz. those of Benares and Mathura, are built in the form of crosses."*

2. That the grounds on which the Hindoos found fault with the British government for allowing a temple of Vishnou to fall to ruins, was, that the Christian religion was absolutely one and the same with the ancient Hindoo idolatry :

3. That the travelling Egyptian Therapeuts brought the whole story from India to their monasteries in Egypt, where, some time about the commencement of the Roman monarchy, it was transmuted into Christianity. The tales that had been previously told of the idol of the Ganges, were transferred to the twice-living demon of the Jordan, precisely as we see the histories of the Grecian heroes, plagiarized and told over again of Romans. Thus the combat of the *Horatii* and *Curiatii*, had been related under different names, but with the same circumstances, by *Democrates apud Stobæum*. The action of *Mutius Scævola* was told before of *Agesilaus*, and that of *Curtius* precipitating himself into the gulf, has been ascribed also to a son of King *Midas*. See also Pagan heroes turned into Christian saints, out of number : indeed, half the saints of the Roman calendar are heathen gods and goddesses, and like the Jewish Jesus, a false creation proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain.

4. And lastly, that the Missionaries engaged by the East India Company, and otherwise sent to India for the *ostensible* purpose of propagating the gospel, are employed *really* in the diametrically opposite work, of doing their utmost to suppress it ; and to carry on the counsel which we see guiding their machinations at home, suppressing evidence, perverting facts, destroying or hindering the monuments of antiquity from coming to the knowledge of the community, persecuting and railing at infidels, and keeping up that state of general ignorance and consequent *devotion*, that best disposes enslaved and degraded millions to bow to the yoke of tyranny, and "to order themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters."

* Maurice's *Indian Antiquities*, vol. 2, p. 361, quoted by Mr. Higgins, p. 127, *Celtic Druids*.

CHAPTER XXV.

APOLLO—JESUS CHRIST.

CICERO mentions four of this name. Pausanias and Herodotus, rank Apollo among the Egyptian deities. Diodorus Siculus expressly states, that Isis, after having invented the practice of medicine, taught this art to her son Orus, named also Apollo, who was the last of the Gods that reigned in Egypt. It is easy to trace almost all the Grecian fables and mythologies from Egypt. If the Apollo of the Greeks, was said to be the son of Jupiter, it was because Orus, the Apollo of the Egyptians, had Osiris for his father, whom the Greeks confounded with Jupiter. If the Greek Apollo were reckoned the God of eloquence, music, medicine, and poetry, the reason was, that Osiris, who was the symbol of the sun among the Egyptians, as well as his son Orus, had there taught those liberal arts. If the Greek Apollo were the God and conductor of the muses, it was because Osiris carried with him in his expedition to the Indies, singing women and musicians. This parallel might be carried still further, but enough has been said to prove that the true Apollo was probably of Egypt. Plutarch, however, has decisively shown, that the Egyptians worshipped the Sun under the name of Osiris ; and as Osiris was believed to have travelled into India, and there established civilization and religion, we see at once enough to account for the same God coming to be worshipped in India under a designation in the language of *that* country expressive of the same sense as Chrishna, that is, the Sun. Many have doubted whether Apollo were a real personage, or only the great luminary. Vossius has taken pains to prove this God to be only an ideal being, and that there never was any Apollo but the sun. All the ceremonies performed to his honour, had a manifest relation to the great source of light which he represented ; whence, this learned writer concludes it to be in vain to seek for any other divinity than the sun, adored under the name Apollo.

Without any wish to overthrow or to conflict against a conclusion founded upon such just and incontrovertible premises, one yet cannot restrain one's wish to have known whether so sincere a Christian, in considering the language ascribed to the God Apollo, and the manifest relation to the great source of light in all

the ceremonies performed to his honour, as constituting a complete demonstration, that such a personage as Apollo never had any real existence, and that it was the sun, and the sun only that was worshipped under that designation; whether he had found any clearer references to the source of light in that language and those ceremonies, than—

1. That God should be believed to have said of himself, "*I am the light of the world.*"—John ix. 5. "*I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness.*"—John xii. 46.

2. "*He hath sent me to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*"—Luke iv. 19.

3. That his sacred legends should abound only with such expressions as can have no possible or conceivable application, but to the God of day: "*A light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory (or brightness) of his people.*"—Luke ii. 32.

4. That this should be the express message which his apostles, or months, were to declare concerning him, that "*God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*"—1 John i. 5.

5. That his sincerest worshippers should usually have addressed him in such phrases as "*Phosphore redde diem.*"—

Sweet Phosphor bring the day,
Whose conqu'ring ray
May chase these fogs,—sweet Phosphor bring the day.
Quarle's rendering of Psalm xiii.

6. "*Lighten our darkness we beseech thee Adonai, and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night.*"—Collect, in Evening Service.

7. "*God of God, light of light, very God of very God.*"—Nicene Creed.

8. "*Merciful Adonai, we beseech thee to cast thy bright beams of light upon thy church.*"—Collect of St. John.

9. "*O God, who, by the leading of a star, didst manifest thy only begotten Son to the nations.*"—Collect of the Epiphany.*

10. "*To thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens, and all the powers therein.*"

* Or shining forth.—A Christian poet will best instruct us what star that was. It was none other than Venus, the star of the God of day,

Fairest of stars, last in the train of night,
If better, thou belong not to the dawn—
Sure pledge of day, that crown'st the smiling morn
With thy bright circlet!—*Morning Hymn.*

11. "Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy CLARY," (or brightness).

12. "The clarious company of the (twelve months, or) apostles praise thee.

13. "Thou art the King of Clary, O Christ!"

14. "When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou passest through the constellation, or zodiacal sign—the Virgin."

15. "When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of winter, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven,—i. e. bring on the reign of the summer months, to all believers." And why is it that there should not be one single phrase or form of speech either in the New Testament or in our best Catholic or Protestant liturgies, but in the most strict and literal sense is predicable of the sun, but cannot without an inflected and considerably strained use of speech, and still more strained effort of the understanding, apply to the person of a man. *Resurgere*, to rise again; and *ascendere in cælum*, to ascend into heaven, are expressions so plain and obvious, as that we could hardly find any to express the literal sense, nearer, of what we witness of the rising and setting sun every day of our lives; whereas 'tis only by a most awkward and violent *catachresis* in language, that they can be made to convey their theological significance.

"All are agreed," says Cicero, "that Apollo is none other than the Sun, because the attributes which are commonly ascribed to Apollo do so wonderfully agree thereto."*

We are not allowed, however, to assume, that reasoning so incontrovertibly just and conclusive with respect to the Pagan deity, would hold in any parity of application to Jesus Christ, whom his holy Apostle so emphatically distinguishes as being "*the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*"—John i. 9.

There can be no doubt but that Apollo was more generally received in the Pagan world than any other deity, his worship being so universal, that in almost every region he had temples, oracles, and festivals, as innumerable as his various names and attributes. Among the most conspicuous of his oracles were those of Phocis, at Claros in Ionia, at Delos, Delphi, and Didyma,† on Mount Ismenus,

* *Apolinem, aliud nihil esse quam Solem, omnes consentiunt, quippe cui illa quæ Apollini vulgo tribuuntur, mirè convenient.*—Cic. 3. *De Natura Deo.*

† It can only be ascribed to a momentary suspension of the divine influence which guided the pen of the Evangelist, that one of the epithets of Apollo—Didymus, should have been left in the possession of an apostle of Jesus Christ.—John xx. 24.

in Bœotia, at Larissa among the Argives, and at Heliopolis in Egypt.

“The Egyptians sometimes symbolized him by a radiated circle, and at others by a sceptre with an eye above it—a symbol which we see at this day consecrated to the representation of the Christian *Providence*. Nor should we forget the claims of his ministers to a peculiar character of sanctity and holiness, which we may well wonder how they should ever come to surrender to the pretensions of preachers of Christianity: unless, indeed, we should venture to imagine that there was never any real difference between them, and that the priests of Apollo and of Jesus were ministers of the same religion, and of one and the same deity, under different names. 'Tis certain, that Apollo had a celebrated shrine at Mount Soracte in Italy, where his priests were so remarkable for sanctity, and holiness of heart and life, that they could walk on burning coals unhurt.”—*Bell's Panth. in loco*.

Parkhurst, in his Hebrew Lexicon, under the word הלל 4, informs us, that “the הללו יה—‘Praise ye Jah!’ or ‘Hallelujah!’ which the Septuagint have left untranslated, *Ἀλληλουνια*, which begins and ends so many of the Psalms, ascribed to David, was a solemn form of *praise to God*, which, no doubt, was far prior to the time of David; since the ancient Greeks had their similar acclamation, *Εὐλοεῖν Ἰη*—‘Hallelujee!’ with which they both began and ended their *pæans*, or hymns, in honour of Apollo.”



CHAPTER XXVI.

MERCURY—JESUS CHRIST,

THIS god calls for no further notice in our inquiry, than from the circumstance of his having been distinguished in the Pagan world by the evangelical title of the Logos, or the Word—“The *Word* that in the beginning was with God, and that also was a God.”

Our Christian writers, from whose partial pens we are now obliged to gather all they will permit us to know of the ancient forms of piety, discover considerable apprehension, and a jealous caution in their language, where the resemblance between Paganism and Christianity might be apt to strike the mind too cogently. Where Horace gives us a very extraordinary account of Mer-

cury's descent into hell,* and his causing a cessation of the sufferings there,† our Christian mythologist checks our curiosity, by the sudden break off—"As this perhaps may be a mystical part of his character, we had better let it alone."—*Bell's Panth.* vol. 2. p. 72. But the further back we trace the evidences of the Christian religion, the less concerned we find its advocates to maintain, or even to pretend that there was any difference at all between the essential doctrines of Christianity and Paganism.

AMMONIUS SACCUS, a learned Christian Father, towards the end of the second century, had taught with the highest applause in the Alexandrian school, that "all the Gentile religions, and even the Christian, were to be illustrated and explained by the principles of an *universal philosophy*; but that, in order to this, the fables of the priests were to be removed from Paganism, and the comments and interpretations of the disciples of Jesus from Christianity;‡ while Justin Martyr, the first and most distinguished apologist for the Christian religion, who wrote within fifty years of the time of the Evangelist St. John, boldly challenges the respect of the emperor Adrian and his son, as due to the Christian religion, just exactly on the score of its sameness and identity with the ancient Paganism.

"For by declaring the Logos, the first begotten of God, our Master, Jesus Christ, to be born of a virgin without any human mixture, to be crucified and dead, and to have risen again into heaven; we say no more in this, than what you say of those whom you style the sons of Jove, &c. As to the son of God, called Jesus, should we allow him to be nothing more than man, yet the title of the Son of God is very justifiable upon the account of his wisdom, considering that you have your MERCURY in worship under the title of THE WORD, and Messenger of God."—*Reeve's Apologies of the Fathers*, vol. 1, London, 1716.

Justin might, if he had pleased, have been still more particular, and have shown, that "among the Gauls, more than a hundred years before the Christian era, in the district of Chartres, a festival was annually celebrated to the honour of the Virgo Paritura, *the virgin that should bring forth*."—*Dupuis*, tom. 3, p. 51, 4to edit.

* "He descended into hell."—*Apostles' Creed*. "That he went down into hell, and also did rise again."—*Baptismal Service*. "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison."—1 Pet. iii. 19.

† See the Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus.

‡ Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. vol. 1, p. 171.

Gonzales also writes, that among the Indians he found a temple *Parituræ Virginis, of the virgin about to bring forth.*

The good Christian Father Epiphanius glories in the fact, that the prophecy, "*Behold a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son,*" had been revealed to the Egyptians.—*Celtic Druids*, p. 163. This prophecy, however, should rather have been revealed to the *Irish*, as its literal accomplishment is so strikingly of a piece with the equally authentic miracles of their patron saint, who sailed across the ocean upon a mill-stone, and contrived to heat an oven red-hot with nothing but ice.—"*Life of the glorious Bishop St. Patrick, by Fr. B. B., St. Omers, 1625, by licence of the Censors of Louwaine, of the Bishop of St. Omers, and of the Commissary and Definitor-general of the Seraphic Order.*"

THE WORD—JESUS CHRIST.

The celebrated passage, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,*" &c. (John i. 1.) is a fragment of some Pagan treatise on the Platonic philosophy, and as such is quoted by Amelius, a Pagan philosopher, as strictly applicable to the *Logos*, or Mercury, the Word, as early as the year 263; and is quoted appropriately as an honourable testimony borne to the Pagan deity, *by a barbarian.*

With no intention further off, than that of recognizing the claims of any human being to that title, Amelius has the words, "And this plainly was the Word, by whom all things were made, he being himself eternal, as Heraclitus also would say; and by Jove, the same whom the barbarian affirms to have been in the place and dignity of a principal, and to be with God, and to be God, by whom all things were made, and in whom every thing that was made, has its life and being; who, descending into body, and putting on flesh, took the appearance of a man, though even then he gave proof of the majesty of his nature; nay, and after his dissolution, he was deified again."*

This is the language of one, of whom there is not the least pretence to show that he was a believer of the

* Και ετος̄ αρα ην ο λογος, καθ'ον αι οντα τα γινόμενα εγενετο, ως αν και ο Ηρακλειτος αξιωσει και η δι', ον ο βαρβαρος αξιοι εν της αρχης ταξει τε και αξια καθεοτρητοτα προς θεον ειναι, δι η πανθ' απλως γεγενησθαι εν ω το γενομενων ζην και ζην, και ον πεφυκεναι και εις σωματα πιπτειν, και σαρκα ενδυσαμενον, φανταζεσθαι ανθρωπον, μετα και τε τηνικαυτα δεικνυειν της φυσικης το μεγαλειον αμαλει και αναλυθεντα παλιν αναθενοθαι και θεον ειναι, οιος ην προ το εις σωμα και της σακα και τον ανθρωπον καταχθειναι.—*Euseb. præp. Evan lib. xi. c. 19. Citante Lardner, tom. 4, p. 200.*

Gospel, or even if he had ever heard of it, that he did not reject it ; it was the language of clear, undisguised, and unmingled Paganism. The Logos then, or Word, was a designation purely and exclusively appropriate to the Pagan mythology.

The Valentinians, a sect of Christian heretics of the first century, approximated so closely to Paganism, as to respect and believe a regular theogony, holding, according to Cyrill, that Depth produced Silence, and upon Silence begat the Logos.*

CHAPTER XXVII.

BACCHUS—JESUS CHRIST

WAS the god of good-cheer, wine, and hilarity ; and as such, the poets have been eloquent in his praises. On all occasions of mirth and jollity, they constantly invoked his presence,† and as constantly thanked him for the blessings he bestowed. To him they ascribed the greatest happiness of which humanity is capable,—the forgetfulness of cares, and the delights of social intercourse. It has been usual for Christians invariably to represent this God as a sensual encourager of inebriation and excess ; and reason enough it must be admitted that they have, for giving such a colouring to the matter ; since, only by so doing, could they conceal the resemblance which an impartial observance would immediately discover between the Phœnician YEsus,‡ who taught mankind the culture of the vine, and so without a miracle changed their drink from mere water into wine, “*which cheereth God and man,*” (Judges, ix. 13), and the Egyptian Jesus, who, by a manœuvre upon half a dozen water-pots, was believed to have persuaded a company of intoxicated guests, that he had turned water into wine ; of which the narrator of the story, with a striking tone of sarcasm, remarks, “*This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory ; and his disciples believed on him,*” (John ii. 11). As much as to say, that his disciples only would be the advocates of so egregious an imposture. “*He manifested forth his glory ;*” that is, his

* Βυθος γεννησας Σιγην, και απο της Σιγης εκτεκνοποιει Λογον.

† “*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*”—Matt. xviii. 20.

‡ YEsus.—Volney has shown that YEs was one of the names of Bacchus, which, with the Latin termination, is nothing else than Yesos, or Jesus.

peculiar mythological character, as THE GOD OF WINE, which was in like manner the peculiar characteristic of *Bacchus*.

The real origin of the mystical three letters I H S, surrounded with rays of glory, to this day retained even in our *Protestant* churches, and falsely supposed to stand for *Jesus Hominum Salvator*, is none other than the identical name of *Bacchus*—YES, exhibited in Greek letters, *ΥΗΣ*.—See *Hesychius on the word ΥΗΣ*, i. e. YES, *Bacchus*, Sol, the Sun.

The well-paid apologists of this and all other absurdities that have obtained their translation from Pagan into Christian legends, in vain endeavour to blink the obscenity betrayed in their Greek text. This miracle was not performed till all the witnesses of it were in the last stage of intoxication. “*Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse ; but thou hast kept the good wine until now,*” is the remark of the *Architriclinus*, or ruler of the feast, the only individual, perhaps, except those who contributed to the juggle, who could speak at all. “*Hast kept the good wine until now ;*” that is to say, “Till now, that it is all over with them, and you see them sprawling under the table, or scarce knowing whether their heads or heels are uppermost.” The original text supports this sense, as the same will be found in the drunken odes of *Anacreon* : “*To arms ! But I shall drink. Boy, bring me the goblet ! for I had rather lie dead drunk, than dead.*”*

Nothing short of a debility of intellect produced by religious enthusiasm, similar to the sedative effects of frequently-repeated intoxication, could have hindered Christians from seeing the deep and pungent sarcasm on their religion involved in this drunken miracle, which a moment's rational reflection would expose. In any sense but that of an imposition practised upon men's senses, the miracle involves a physical impossibility, and a moral contradiction. In no idea that a rational mind can form of the power of God himself, can we conceive that he could make a thing *to be* and *not to be*, and at the same time ; or so operate on the past, as to cause that *to have been*, which really *had not been*. That fluid, therefore,

* Οπγίς' ελω δε πινω
Φερ' εμοι κυπελλον ω παι !
Μεθυοντα γαρ με κρισθαι
Πολλυ κρισσον η θανοντα.

Anacreon.

Πας ανθρωπος πρωτον τον καλον οινον
τιθησι, και οταν μεθυσθωσι τοτε τον
ελασσω.

whatever it was, which had not been pressed out of the grape,—which had not been generated, concocted, matured and exuded through the secretory ducts of the vine, drawn up by its roots out of the earth, circulated through its capillary tubes, and effunded into its fruit, could not be wine, nor could God himself make it to be so.

“ That were to make
Strange contradiction, which to God himself
Impossible is held.” Milton.

The more shrewd and political among those who profess and call themselves Christians, have avowed themselves not a little ashamed of this miracle, have seen and recognized its palpably Pagan character, and sighed, and wished that it were peacefully apocryphized out of its place in the sacred volume.

Our only moral use of these Christian admissions shall be to remind our readers, for the advantage of some further stage of our argument, that we have here, in the very volume which has so long been pretended to contain “truth without any mixture of error,” an affair not only decidedly and unequivocally fabulous, but physically impossible ; and this re-edited under an apparatus of Christian names, and told with circumstances of time, place and character—*stet exempli gratia !*

The Egyptian Bacchus was brought up at Nysa, and is famous as having been the conqueror of India. In Egypt he was called Osiris, in India Dionysius, and not improbably *Chrishna*, as he was called Adoneus, which signifies the *Lord of Heaven*, or the LORD AND GIVER OF LIGHT, in Arabia ; and Liber, throughout the Roman dominions, from whence is derived our term *liberal*, for every thing that is generous, frank, and amiable.

Though egregiously scandalized by the moderns, as all the Pagan divinities are, where Christians are the carvers, he was far otherwise understood by the ancients. The intention of his imagined presence at the festive board was to *restrain* and *prevent*, and not to authorize excess. His discipline prescribed the most strict sobriety, and the most rational and guarded temperance in the use of his best gift to man, which wisely used, exalts as much our moral as it does our physical energies, endears man to man, gives vigour to his understanding, life to his wit, and inspiration to his discourse. Bacchus was, in the strictest and fairest sense of the word, a pure and holy

god ; he was deity rendered amiable. He is called by Horace in general the *modest* God, the *decent* God. The finest moral of his allegorical existence is, that he was never to be seen in company with Mars ; so that he had juster claims than any other to be designated “the *Prince of Peace*.” Orpheus,* however, directly states that Bacchus was a *lawgiver*, calls him *Moses*, and attributes to him the two tables of the law.† It is well known, however, that his characteristic attribute was immortal boyhood ; and since it is admitted that no real Bacchus ever existed, but that he was only a mask or figure of some concealed truth, (see Horace’s inimitable ode to this deity,) there can be no danger of our dropping the clue of his allegorical identification, in winding it through all the mazes of his vocabulary of names, and all the multifarious personifications of the same primordial idea.

But the most striking circumstance of this particular emblem of the SUN is, that in all the ancient forms of invocation to the SUPREME BEING, we find the very identical expressions appropriated to the worship of Bacchus ; such as, *Io Terombe !—Let us cry unto the Lord ! Io ! or Io Baccoth !—God ; see our tears ! Jehovah Evan ! Hevoe ! and Eloah !—The Author of our existence, the mighty God ! Hu Esh !—Thou art the fire ! and Elta Esh !—Thou art the life ! and Io Nissi !—O Lord, direct us !* which last is the literal English of the Latin motto in the arms of the City of London retained to this day, “*Domine dirige nos.*” The Romans, out of all these terms, preferred the name of *Baccoth*, of which they composed *Bacchus*. The more delicate ear of the Greeks was better pleased with the words *Io Nissi*, out of which they formed *Dionysius*.

That it was none other than the SUN which the Jews themselves understood to be meant, and actually worshipped, under his characteristic epithet of *THE LORD*, see “confirmation strong as proof of holy writ” in the Jewish general’s address to the *Sun* :—

“*Then spake Joshua to THE LORD, and said, SUN, stand thou still upon Gibeon ! So THE SUN stood still in the midst*

* Orpheus, who for the most part is followed by Homer, was the great introducer of the rites of the heathen worship among the Greeks, being charged with having invented the very names of the gods. He wrote, that all things were made by *One Godhead with three names*, and that this *God is all things*.—*Hebrew Lexicon*, 347.

† Bacchum, Orpheus vocat *μοσην* hoc est *Moses* et *θεσμοφορος*—Legislatorem, et eidem tribuit *διπλαξα θεσμον θεσμον* quasi *duplices legis tabulas*.—*Porney. Panth. Mythicum*, p. 57.

of heaven. *And there was no day like that, before it or after it, that THE LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man.*"—Joshua x. 12, 13, 14.

The BACCHANALIA, or religious feasts in honour of Bacchus, were celebrated with much solemnity, and with a fervent and impassioned piety; among the ancients, particularly the Athenians, who, till the commencement of the Olympiads, even computed their years from them, dating all transactions and events, as Christians have since done, with an Anno Domini, *in the year of our Lord*. The Bacchanalia are sometimes called Orgies; from the transport and enthusiasm with which they were celebrated. The form and disposition of the solemnity depended at Athens on the appointment of the supreme magistrate, and was at first extremely simple; but by degrees, it became encumbered with abundance of ceremonies, and attended with a world of dissoluteness and excess, probably competing in enormity and indecency with a Christian carnival: so that the Pagan Romans, who had adopted the orgies, were afterwards ashamed of the exhibition, and suppressed them throughout Italy, by a decree of the Senate.

The orgies celebrated originally to the honour of Bacchus, are still continued in honour of the same deity, under another epithet; as may be observed by any person who should choose to waste an hour in attending the revival meetings of the wilder orders of Christian Methodists—the Dunkers, Jumpers, &c. and all who pretend to a more spiritual and primitive Christianity. The hysterical young women, sighing, moaning,

“Exulting, trembling, raging, fainting,
Possessed beyond the muse’s painting,”

under the impressions which our evangelical fanatics endeavour to produce on their imaginations, are the very antitypes of the frantic priestesses of Bacchus. Nor can any man doubt, that if the advance of civilization, and the improved reason of mankind, did not stand in bar of such excesses, the state of mind called *sanctification*, which our clergy aim to render as general as they can, would continue as evangelized Bacchanalia to this day.

In the ancient Orphic verses sung in the orgies of Bacchus, as celebrated throughout Egypt, Phœnicia, Syria, Arabia, Asia Minor, Greece, and ultimately in Italy, it was related how *that* God, who had been born in Arabia, was picked up in a box that floated on the water, and

took his name *Mises*, in signification of his having been “saved from the waters,”* and *Bimater*, from his having had two mothers;† that is, one by nature, and another who had adopted him. He had a rod with which he performed miracles, and which he could change into a serpent at pleasure. He passed the Red Sea dry-shod, at the head of his army. He divided the waters of the rivers Orontes and Hydaspus, by the touch of his rod, and passed through them dry-shod. By the same mighty wand, he drew water from the rock; and wherever he marched, the land flowed with wine, milk, and honey.”

The Indian nations were believed to have been entirely involved in darkness till the light of Bacchus shone on them.

Homer relates, how in a wrestling match with Pallas, Bacchus yielded the victory;‡ and Pausanias, that when the Greeks had taken Troy, they found a box which contained an image of this god, which Eurypilus having presumptuously ventured to look into, was immediately smitten with madness.§ Why should we further prosecute this laborious idleness? Demonstration can call for no more. Every part of the Old Testament, from first to last, is Pagan: not so much as one single line, containing or conveying the vestige of any idea or conceit whatever, find we in God’s temple, but what will fit back again and dove-tail into its original niche in the walls of the Pantheon.—Compare the Chapter on the State of the Jews, in this *DIEGESIS*.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

PROMETHEUS—JESUS CHRIST.

THIS was a deity who united the divine and human nature in one person, and was confessedly “*both God and man*”—perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting; equal to the father as touching his godhead, but inferior to the father as touching his manhood: who, although he was God and man, yet was he not two, but one Prometheus; one, not by conversion of the godhead into flesh, but by taking the manhood into God; one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person: for as the reasonable

* From מָצַח to draw out or forth.—“Because she said, מָצַחְתִּי—*I drew him out*.—Exod. ii. 10.

† Διμῆρος—Bacchi cognomen.

‡ Iliad. 48.

§ In Achain.

soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Prometheus : who, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate, and was made man, and was crucified also for us, under FORCE and STRENGTH ; he suffered, and descended into hell, rose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty."

Thus far the Pagan and the Christian *credenda* ran hand in hand together ; and it is a more than striking coincidence, that the name *Prometheus* should be directly synonymous with the *Logos*, or *Word of God*, an epithet applied by St. John to the *God and man*, or demi-deity of the Gospel, from *πρῶ*, *before-hand*, and *μηδός*, *care*, or *counsel* ; hence directly signifying the Christian deity, PROVIDENCE, which we see emblemized as an eye surrounded with rays of glory, and casting its beams of light upon the affairs of our world. Indeed, under this designation, he continues to this day a more fashionable deity than the *Logos* of St. John. We find acknowledgments of dependence on *Divine Providence*, and the blessing of *Providence*, or PROMETHEUS, spoken of in our British parliament, occurring in his majesty's speeches, and received with the most respectful sentiment from one end of the kingdom to the other, where the introduction of the name of Jesus Christ, in the place of that of Prometheus or Providence, would be received with an universal smirk of undisguised contempt.

The best information of the character, attributes, and actions of this deity, is to be derived from the beautiful tragedy of *Προμηθεύς Δεσμώτης*, or *Prometheus Bound*, of Æschylus,* which was acted in the theatre of Athens, 500 years before the Christian era, and is by many considered to be the most ancient dramatic poem now in existence. The plot was derived from materials even at that time of an infinitely remote antiquity. Nothing was ever so exquisitely calculated to work upon the feelings of the spectator. No author ever displayed greater powers of poetry, with equal strength of judgment, in supporting through the piece the august character of the *divine sufferer*. The spectators themselves were unconsciously made a party to the interest of the scene : its hero was *their* friend, their benefactor, their creator, and their *saviour* ; his wrongs were incurred in their quarrel—his sorrows were endured for their salvation ; "he was wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their

* Or Potter's beautiful translation of it, of which I here avail myself.

iniquities ; the chastisement of their peace was upon him, and by his stripes they were healed," (Isaiah liii. 5). "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." The majesty of his silence, whilst the ministers of an offended God were nailing him by the hands and feet to Mount Caucasus, could be only equalled by the modesty with which he relates, while hanging on the cross,* his services to the human race, which had brought on him that horrible crucifixion :—

"I will speak,
Not as upbraiding them, but my own gifts
Commending. 'Twas I who brought sweet hope
T' inhabit in their hearts—I brought
The fire of heaven to animate their clay :
And through the clouds of barbarous ignorance
Diffused the beams of knowledge. In a word,
Prometheus taught each useful art to man."

In answer to a call made on him, to explain how his philanthropy could have incurred such a terrible punishment, he proceeds :—

"See what, a god, I suffer from the gods !
For mercy to mankind, I am not deemed
Worthy of mercy ; but in this uncouth
Appointment, am fixed here,
A spectacle dishonourable to Jove !
On the throne of heaven scarce was he seated,
On the powers of heaven
He showered his various benefits, thereby
Confirming his sovereignty ; but for unhappy mortals
Had no regard, but all the present race
Willed to extirpate, and to form anew.
None, save myself, opposed his will. I dared,
And boldly pleading, saved them from destruction—
Saved them from sinking to the realms of night ;
For which offence, I bow beneath these pains,
Dreadful to suffer, piteous to behold !"

In the catastrophe of the plot, his especially professed friend, OCEANUS, the Fisherman, as his name Petræus indicates, (PETRÆUS was an interchangeable synonyme of the name Oceanus,) being unable to prevail on him to make his peace with Jupiter, by throwing the cause of human redemption out of his hands,† "forsook him and

* The cross referring to the attitude of the sufferer, Prometheus may be called σταυρωμένος, or ανισκαλοπισμένος, as well as Jesus.

† "Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord : this shall not be unto thee."—Matt. xvi. 22.

fled." None remained to be witnesses of his dying agonies, but the chorus of ever amiable and ever-faithful women which also bewailed and lamented him, (Luke xxiii. 27,) but were unable to subdue his inflexible philanthropy. Overcome at length, by the intensity of his pains, he curses Jupiter in language hardly different in terms, and but little inferior in sublimity to the "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani!*" of the Gospel. And immediately the whole frame of nature became convulsed: the earth shook, the rocks rent, the graves were opened; and in a storm that seemed to threaten the dissolution of the universe, the curtain fell on the sublimest scene ever presented to the contemplation of the human eye—a DYING GOD! The Christian muse has inspired our modern poets with no strains on this theme, but such as bear the character of plagiarism, parody, or paraphrase on the Greek tragedy. A worshipper of Prometheus would look in vain through all our collections of sacred poetry for a single idea which his own forms of piety had not suggested, or a single phrase whose reference would not seem to him, to have as direct an application to the god-man of Æschylus, as to the Jesus of the Evangelists:

"Lo, streaming from the fatal tree,
His all-atoning blood!
Is this the Infinite? 'Tis he—
Prometheus, and a God!
Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And veil his glories in,
When God, the great Prometheus, died,
For man, the creature's sin."

The preternatural darkness which attended the crucifixion of Prometheus, was natural enough as exhibited on the stage, and is beautifully described in the language of the tragedy. Nor is there any difficulty in conceiving, that when the mighty effect of so deep a tragedy on the feelings and sentiments of the audience, became an inexhaustible source of wealth to the performers, there would be found those who would be shrewd enough to discover the policy of enhancing and perpetuating so profitable an impression on the vulgar mind, by maintaining that there was much more than a mere show in the business; that it was an exhibition of circumstances that had really happened; that Prometheus was a real personage, and had actually done, and suffered, and spoken as in so lively a manner *had been set before them*; that the tragedy

was a gospel put into metre ; and that nothing but “ *an evil heart of unbelief* ” could induce any man to doubt “ *the certainty of those things wherein he had been instructed.* ” It is probably no more than a figure of speech, though certainly very injudiciously chosen, in which Origen calls the crucifixion of Christ the most awful tragedy that was ever acted.*

But the pretence of the *reality* of the event would *break down*, in the judgment of the better-informed, from the total want of evidence to support that part of the detail, which, had it been real, could not have wanted the clearest and most constraining demonstration. The darkness which closed the scene on the suffering Prometheus, was easily exhibited on the stage, by putting out the lamps ; but when the tragedy was to become history, and the fiction to be turned into fact, the lamp of day could not be so easily disposed of. Nor can it be denied that the miraculous darkness which the Evangelists so solemnly declare to have attended the crucifixion of Christ, labours under precisely the same fatality of an absolute and *total* want of evidence.

Gibbon, in his usual strain of sarcasm and irony, keenly asks, “ How shall we excuse the supine inattention of the pagan and philosophic world to those evidences which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason, but to their senses ? This miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, and the devotion of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history. It happened during the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers, in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phænomena of nature—earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses; which his indefatigable curiosity could collect ; both the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phænomenon to which the mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe.”—*Gibbon*, vol. 2, ch. 15, p. 379.

This objection of Gibbon is answered by Bishop Wat-

* His answer to Celsus, chapter 27. What other than this is the sense of those words of the apostolic chief of sinners, “ O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you ? ”—Gal. iii. 1. Surely, it was not in the country of the Galatians that Christ was crucified ; nor could he have been set forth before their eyes, and *evidently*, otherwise than by a picture, or in a theatrical representation !

son, in a *double-entendre* paragraph, which opens with the curious *word to the wise*, that “though he was aware he was liable to be misunderstood in what he was going to say, yet *Mr. Gibbon* would not misunderstand him.” Then follows the most extraordinary declaration of his own, (a bishop’s) faith, “that however mysterious the darkness at the crucifixion might have been, he had no doubt the power of God was *as much* concerned in its production, as it was in the opening of the graves, and the resurrection of the dead bodies of the saints that slept, which accompanied that darkness.”—*Third Letter to Gibbon, last paragraph*. Another way of saying, that every sensible man must perceive that one part of the story was just as probable as the other, or that it was a romance altogether. The good Bishop ventured to trust his security to the well-proved truth of the adage, “None are so blind as those who *will not see*.”

The immoral and mischievous tendency of the doctrine of atonement for sin, so acceptable to guilty minds, and so eagerly embraced by the greatest monsters of iniquity, had been preached by self-interested priests, and reprobated by all who wished well to mankind, long before that doctrine was deduced from the Christian Scriptures, long before those Scriptures are pretended to have been written.

Before the period assigned to the birth of Christ, the poet Ovid had assailed the demoralizing delusion with the most powerful shafts of philosophic scorn :

“Cum sis ipse nocens, moritur cur victimæ pro te?
Stultitia est morte alterius sperare salutem.”

“*When thou thyself art guilty, why should a victim die for thee? What folly it is to expect salvation from the death of another.*”

No particle of difficulty remains, then, in accounting for the fact, that in *that* portion of the Acts of the Apostles in which the *miraculous style* is discontinued, and we so clearly trace the probable and most likely real adventures or journal of a missionary sent out from the college of the Egyptian Therapeuts joined on as an appendix to some fragment of their sacred legends which detailed the mystical adventures of the supposed first founders of their order, whose example the missionary was to have continually before him,*—we should read, that when the

* This appendix commences in the 13th chapter, where we find Saul in the mission at Antioch, and preaching again, one of the sermons which had been before ascribed to Peter.

apostolic Therapeut attempted to preach his doctrine of "*Jesus Christ and him crucified*," at Athens, he found that the Athenians were already in possession of all he had to communicate, and that what he was endeavouring to set off as a doctrine newly revealed, was with them a very old story. He brought to their ears "no new thing."* The Epicurean and Stoical philosophers were more at home than himself upon that subject, and called him "*a babbler*," the very term that most expressively designates the character of a doting *ignoramus*, who, in the arrogance of his own conceit, will be for ever foisting up old stories of a hundred thousand years standing, and swearing that they had occurred in his own experience, and had happened to nobody else but some particular acquaintances of his.

The majority, however, carried the vote that he should have a fair hearing, and Paul was allowed to preach in the Areopagus. The previous rebuke he had received had completely subdued his impertinence; he no more presumed to lay claim to originality in the crucifying story. He preached PURE DEISM, quoted their own poets, and ventured not once so much as to name *his Jesus*, or to make an allusion that could be construed as referring to him rather than to any other of the god-men or man-gods who had risen from the dead as well as he. (Acts xvii).

PROMETHEUS, exactly answering to the Christian personification PROVIDENCE, is, like that personification, used sometimes as an epithet synonymous with the Supreme Deity himself. The Pagan phrase, "*Thank Prometheus*," like the Christian one, "*Thank Providence*," its literal interpretation, meant exactly the same as "*Thank God!*" Thus in *The ORPHIC Hymn* to Chronus or Saturn,† we have this sublime address to the Supreme Deity under his name *Prometheus*, "*Illustrious, cherishing Father, both of the immortal gods and of men, various of counsel,‡ spot-*

* Acts xvii. 18.

† See the original in Eschenbachius's edit. p. 110. Compare also my learned and amiable friend's edition in original Greek inscription types, cast at his own expense.

‡ The three similar epithets, "*Various of Counsel*," "*Various in design*," "*Tortuous in counsel*," would justify the doctrine, that the whole Trinity was comprehended in this "*Prometheus the power of God, and Prometheus the wisdom of God*." (1 Cor. i. 24.) "*His name shall be called, Wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God*." (Isa. ix. 6.) Lactantius admits, that though what the poets delivered concerning the creation of man was corrupted, it was not different in effect from the truth as held by Christians; for in that they have asserted that man was created out of clay by PROMETHEUS, they were not wrong as to the fact, but only as to the name of the Creator.—*Lactant. Instit. lib. i. c. 10.*—*Kortholto Pagano Obtrectatore, Citante p. 84.*

less, powerful, mighty Titan, who consumest all things, and again thyself repairest them, who holdest the ineffable bands throughout the boundless world ; thou universal parent of successive being, various in design, fructifier of the earth and of the starry heaven, DREAD PROMETHEUS, who dwellest in all parts of the world, author of generation, tortuous in counsel, most excellent, hear our suppliant voice, and send of our life a happy blameless end." Amen!



CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS.

THE NILE was worshipped as a god by the inhabitants of the countries fertilized by its inundations, before all records of human opinions or actions. *Plato*, who flourished 348 years before the Christian era, records, that the Egyptian priests had pointed out to him on their pyramids the symbolical hieroglyphics of a religion which had existed in uninterrupted orthodoxy among them for upwards of ten thousand years. Nor has the progress of Christianity or civilization, even at this day, entirely abolished the religious honours paid to this king of streams. The priests called the Cophtes still think that they "sanctify its waters to the mystical washing away of sin," by throwing into it some beads or some bits of a cross ; as in our own baptismal service in the church of England at this day, the priest spreads his hand over the font, and uses the words, "Sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin ;" and then sprinkling the water so sanctified in the child's face, and making the sign of the cross upon its forehead, he adds, "We do sign him with the sign of the cross," &c.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS ENTIRELY PAGAN.

The holy father *Minucius Felix*, in his *Octavius*, written as early as the year 211, indignantly resents the supposition that the sign of the cross should be considered as exclusively a Christian symbol ; and represents his advocate of the Christian argument, as retorting on an infidel opponent, "As for the adoration of crosses, which you object against us, I must tell you, that we neither adore crosses

nor desire them; you it is, ye Pagans, who worship wooden gods, who are the most likely people to adore wooden crosses, as being, parts of the same substance with your deities. For what else are your ensigns, flags, and standards, but crosses gilt and beautified. Your victorious trophies not only represent a simple cross, but a cross with a man upon it. The sign of a cross naturally appears in a ship, either when she is under sail, or rowed with expanded oars like the palm of our hands. Not a jugum erected but exhibits the sign of a cross; and when a pure worshipper adores the true God, with hands extended, he makes the same figure. Thus you see that the sign of the cross has either some foundation in nature, or in your own religion, and therefore ought not to be objected against Christians.”*

Meagher, a Popish priest, who came over from the Roman Catholic communion, and attached himself (for what reasons, or with what motives, must rest with himself alone) to the ministry of the church of England, furnishes us with the most satisfactory prototype of what he had come at last to consider as a corrupt Christianity, in the idolatrous worship of the Nile. The ignorant gratitude of a superstitious people, while they adored the river on whose inundations the fertility of their provinces depended, could not fail of attaching notions of sanctity and holiness to the posts that were erected along its course, and which, by a *transverse beam*, indicated the height to which, at the spot where the beam was fixed, the waters might be expected to rise. This cross at once warned the traveller to secure his safety, and formed a standard of the value of the land. Other rivers may add to the fertility of the country through which they pass, but the Nile is the absolute cause of that great fertility of the Lower Egypt, which would be all a desert, as bad as the most sandy parts of Africa, without this river. It supplies it both with soil and moisture, and was therefore gratefully addressed, not merely as an ordinary river-god, but by its express title of the Egyptian Jupiter. The crosses, therefore, along the banks of the river, would naturally share in the honours of the stream, and be the most expressive emblem of good fortune, peace, and plenty. The two ideas could never be separated: the fertilizing flood was

* Reeves's Apologies of the Fathers, &c. vol. 1, p. 139. This Reverend Mr. Reeves is unquestionable authority for the text of the orthodox Fathers; in which he could not be wrong. We may be allowed however to question his authority, where he would persuade us that, *all the heretics ate children*.

the *waters of life*, that conveyed every blessing, and even existence itself, to the provinces through which they flowed.

One other and most obvious hieroglyph completed the expressive allegory : The *Demon of Famine*, who, should the waters fail of their inundation, or not reach the elevation indicated by the position of the transverse beam upon the upright, would reign in all his horrors over their desolated lands. This symbolical personification was, therefore, represented as a miserable emaciated wretch, who had grown up "as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground, who had no form nor comeliness ; and when they should see him, there was no beauty that they should desire him." Meagre were his looks ; sharp misery had worn him to the bone. His crown of thorns indicated the sterility of the territories over which he reigned. The reed in his hand, gathered from the banks of the Nile, indicated, that it was only the mighty river, by keeping within its banks, and thus withholding its wonted munificence, that placed an unreal sceptre in his gripe. He was nailed to the cross, in indication of his entire defeat ; and the superscription of his infamous title, " THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS," expressively indicated, that *Famine, Want, or Poverty*, ruled the destinies of the most slavish, beggarly, and mean-spirited race of men with whom they had the honour of being acquainted.

Madame Dacier, in her edition of Plato, quotes authorities in proof that, when Plato visited Egypt, the priests showed him the symbols of a religion which, they alleged, had continued in observance among their ancestors for upwards of ten thousand years.

From the way in which it was apparent to M. Dupuis, that the mythologies and astronomical allegories of the ancients were connected with the periodical return of the seasons, he was induced to suppose that they must have originated in Egypt, where the annual inundation or deluge was marked in so peculiar a manner ; and all ecclesiastical indications, it must be admitted, point to Egypt, as the birth-place and cradle of Religion. But it has happened not to occur to the reflections of M. Dupuis, nor to ecclesiastical writers, that with the variation of a few weeks only, the Ganges and the Indus produce precisely similar phenomena to those of the Nile. And it is in a very peculiar manner worthy of consideration, that a colony from India arriving in Egypt, so far from finding

their country's superstition discouraged by dissimilarity of circumstances, would find every circumstance of season and climate favourable to it, tending to recall the same associations of idea, and to sanctify the same absurdities of practice.

The most learned antiquaries agree in holding it unquestionable that Egypt was colonized from India. It received one of the earliest swarms of emigrants from the Bactrian hive. And thus, even if we had not the proof we have yet to adduce, of the actual *importation* by the monks of Alexandria, would the superstitions of India get footing in Egypt; the Chrishna of the Ganges would become the Christ of the Nile; and the priests be left to no better expedient to disguise the real origin of their allegorical figment, than by transporting him again to the banks of the Jordan. The first draft of the mystical adventures of Chrishna, as brought from India into Egypt, was **THE DIEGESIS**; the first version of the Diegesis was the **GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE EGYPTIANS**; the first renderings out of the language of Egypt into that of Greece, for the purpose of imposing on the nations of Europe, were *the apocryphal gospels*; the corrected, castigated, and *authorised* versions of these apocryphal compilations were the gospels of our four evangelists.

It should never be forgotten, that *the sign of the cross*, for ages anterior to the Augustan era, was in common use among the Gentiles. It was the most sacred symbol of Egyptian idolatry. It is on most of the Egyptian obelisks, and was believed to possess all the devil-expelling virtues which have since been ascribed to it by Christians. The monogram, or symbol of the god Saturn, was the sign of the cross, together with a ram's horn, in indication of the Lamb of God. Jupiter also bore a cross with a horn, Venus a cross with a circle. The famous *Cruz ansata* is to be seen in all the buildings of Egypt; and the most celebrated temples of the idol Chrishna in India, like our Gothic cathedrals, were built in the form of crosses.

The *sign of the cross* is the very mark which in Ezekiel, ix. 4, the Lord commands his messenger to "*go through the midst of Jerusalem, and set upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.*" But here, as in a thousand other places, our English rendering *protestantizes*, for the purpose of disguising the papistical sense, just as their immediate predecessors, the paptists, had set them the example of

christianizing whatever came in their way, for the purpose of concealing the *Pagan* origination.

On a Phœnician medal found in the ruins of Citium, and engraved in Dr. Clarke's Travels, and proved by him to be Phœnician, are inscribed not only the cross, but the rosary, or string of beads, attached to it, together with the identical *Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.*

“How it came to pass,” says the pious Mr. Skelton, “that the Egyptians, Arabians, and Indians, before Christ came among us, paid a remarkable veneration to the sign of the cross, is to me unknown; but the fact itself is known. In some places this sign was given to men who had been accused of crime, but acquitted upon trial; and in Egypt it stood for the signification of *eternal life.*”* O Christian revelation, what is it that thou hast revealed?

THE CHRISTIANS, WORSHIPPERS OF THE GOD SERAPIS.

But it is more than evidence of this character that summons our admiration in the charge of *Serapidolatry*, or the worship of the god Serapis, which was brought against the primitive Christians, by no vulgar accuser, no bigotted intolerant reviler, but by that philosophic and truth-respecting witness, the emperor Adrian.† In a certain letter which he writes, while in the course of his travels, to the Consul Servianus, he states, that he found the worshippers of the god Serapis in that country distinguished by the name of Christians. “Those,” he says, “who worship Serapis, are Christians; and those who are especially consecrated to Serapis, call themselves the bishops of Christ.” In relief of which charge, the learned Kortholt, from whose valuable work, the *Paganus Obtrectator*, I have taken this passage, pleads, and indeed it might be so, that when this emperor was in Egypt, some of the Christians, actuated by fear, concealing their true religion for a season, might have held out an appearance of having embraced the superstition of the Pagans. Thus in the Ancient Martyrology, in the history of Epi-

* Skelton's Appeal to Common Sense, p. 45.

† In Epistola quadam ad Servianum cos. Imperator Hadrianus prodidit, columnas ipsos in Ægypto Serapidem, sive numen illud Ægyptiorum præcipuum, quod sub bovis specie eos fuisse veneratos, nemo ignorat. Illi aut qui Serapim colunt, CHRISTIANI sunt, et devoti sunt Serapi, qui se CHRISTI Episcopos dicunt. —Kortholti Pagan. Obtrect. de SerapidolatRIA, lib. 2, c. 5, p. 324.—See this article at length in the chapter that adduces the testimony of the emperor Adrian.

charmus, an Egyptian martyr, it is related that all the Christians in Alexandria, upon the coming of a cruel judge, either fled away, or pretended to be still followers of the Pagan impiety : and if the approach of a judge only could produce this effect, it is no wonder that the coming of the emperor himself, and he, as they all knew, being a most strenuous assertor of the Gentile superstitions, should have a similar effect*. In Socrates's History of Constantine, he relates how that most holy emperor went about to promote the Christian religion, and to banish the rites and ceremonies of the Ethnics, he set up his own image in their idolatrical temples : and finding that there prevailed a general belief of the people of Egypt that it was the god Serapis who caused the river Nile to overflow and fertilize their country, in honour of which, a certain *ell* (the upright post with the transverse beam which had been used to measure the height and extent of the inundation) was annually brought with religious ceremonies into the temple of the god Serapis, the emperor commanded that *ell* to be brought into the church of Alexandria. Upon this profanation, the Egyptian people had wrought themselves up to the too-critical belief, that the Nile would resent the indignity, and no more condescend to overflow his banks as usual ; thereby subjecting themselves to a sort of miracle, which was pretty safely promised them beforehand ; for, behold ! on the following year the river did not only overflow after his wonted manner, and from that time forth keep his course, (O most miraculous of all miracles !) but also did thereby declare unto the world that Nilus was accustomed to overflow, not after their superstitious opinion, but by the secret determination of Divine Providence.†

Notwithstanding, however, this adoption of the Pagan symbol of the cross into the Christian church, and the rapid propagation of Christianity, it was not till after the commencement of the fifth century, when the emperor Theodosius had given the exterminatory business, by commission, into the hands of Theophilus bishop of Alexandria, that it was completed with something like episcopal vigour. “ By the procurement and industry of Theophilus the bishop, the emperor commanded that all the idol groves of the Ethnics within Alexandria should down to the ground, and that Theophilus should oversee

* Kortholt in eodem loco.

† Socrates Schol. lib. 1, c. 14.

it. Theophilus, being thus authorized, omitted nothing that might tend to the reproach and contumely of heathenish ceremonies : down goes the temple of Mithra, with all its idolatrical filth and superstition : down goes the god Serapis ; their embued and bloody mysteries are publicly derided ; their vain and ridiculous practices are publicly ridiculed in the open market-place, to their utter shame and ignominy.”* I need not continue this hideous passage through the description which follows, and was sure to follow, of the sanguinary horrors in which it issued.

To deny that Christianity was and hath been the religion of the sword from first to last, and hath been propagated and sustained by means of violence and fraud, and by no other means, or to assert that there ever was on earth, or could have been any other religion that ever made its professors of all sorts and in all ages, one half so savage, so bloody, and so wicked, is, as it were, to assert any thing, to trample all evidence of fact and history under foot, to deny the existence of the sun, to deny that the jury who convicted the Rev. Robert Taylor of blaspheming their Lord Jesus Christ “BY FORCE AND ARMS,” were a perjured jury, to deny that there is any gaol at Oakham, any innocent man in that gaol, or truth in truth itself.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS FOUND IN THE TEMPLE OF SERAPIS.

“In the temple of Serapis, now overthrown and rifled throughout, there were found engraven in the stones certain letters which they call hieroglyphical ; the manner of their engraving resembled the form of the cross. The which, when both Christians and Ethnics beheld before them, every one applied them to his proper religion. The Christians affirmed that the cross was a sign or token of the passion of Christ, and the proper symbol of their profession. The Ethnics avouched that therein was contained something in common, belonging *as well to Serapis as to Christ* ; and that the sign of the cross signified *one thing* unto the Ethnics, and another to the Christians.—While they contended thus about the meaning of these hieroglyphical letters,† many of the Ethnics became Chris-

* Socrates Schol. lib. 5, c. 16.

† We see at this day, without any countenance of Scripture, the letters I.N.R.I. engraved in all our *idolatrical* representations of the crucifixion. It is obvious that they would bear any other reading as well as that which Christian conceit may give them.

tians, for they perceived at length the sense and meaning of those letters, and that they prognosticated salvation, and LIFE TO COME.”*

This most important evidence of the utter indifference between Christianity and any, even the grossest forms of the ancient Paganism, is supplied by a Christian historian ; and independent of its fairness, as taken from such a source, and its inherent versimilitude, is corroborated by a parallel passage from the ecclesiastical history of Sozomenes, who, about the year 443, wrote the history of the church from the reign of Constantine the Great to that of the younger Theodosius. He is speaking of the temple of the god Serapis†—“It is reported that when this temple was destroyed, there appeared some of those characters called hieroglyphics, surrounding *the sign of the cross*, in engraven stones ; and that, by the skilful in these matters, these hieroglyphics were held to have signified this inscription—THE LIFE TO COME ! And this became a pretence for becoming Christians to many of the Grecians, because there were even other letters which signified this sacred end when this character appeared.”

Thus in every genuine historical document, we are continually met by evidence of the superfluous prodigality of miracles, and *that* offence against the laws of the drama, as well as of historical probability, which makes a god appear where there was no knot worthy of a god. The Pagans, so far from needing miracles to convert them, were at all times ready to embrace any new faith whatever : no trick could be too gross to fail of success on their easy credulity. They really had not the CAPACITY of inflicting martyrdom : they were ready to be winked and whistled into Christianity.—Socrates continues his account :

* Εν δε τῷ ναῷ τοῦ Σεραπιδὸς λυομένου, καὶ γυμνουμένου, ηὐρήτο γράμματα εὐκὲς χαραγμένα τοῖς λίθοις, τῷ καλούμενῳ ιερογλυφικῷ. Ἦσαν δὲ οἱ χαρακτῆρες σταλρῶν ἔχοντες τυπούς. Τούτους ὁρῶντες Χριστιανοὶ τε καὶ Ἕλληνες, τῇ ἰδίᾳ, ἑκάτεροι θρησκείᾳ προσηρμοζόντο Χριστιανοὶ μὲν γὰρ σημεῖον τοῦ κατὰ Χριστοῦ σωτηριαδὸς παθούσης εἶναι λέγοντες τὸν σταυρὸν, οἱ κείον εἶναι τὸν χαρακτῆρα ἐνομιζόν. Ἕλληνες δὲ τι κοινὸν Χριστῷ καὶ Σεραπὶ διέλεγον, εἰ ὁ σταυροειδὴς χαρακτῆρ, ἄλλο μὲν Χριστιανοῖς, ἄλλο δὲ Ἕλλησι ποιεῖται τὸ σύμβολον. Τούτων δὲ ἀμφισβητούμενων, τινες, τῶν Ἑλλήνων τῷ Χριστιανισμῷ προσελθόντες, τὰ ιερογλυφικὰ τε γράμματα ἐπιστάμενοι, διερμηνεύοντες τὸν σταυροειδὲ χαρακτῆρα. Ἐλεγον σημαίνειν ζωὴν ἑπέρχομεν. —Socrat. Eccl. Hist. lib. 5, c. 17.

† Φασὶ δὲ τοῦ ναοῦ καθαιρούμενου τούτου, τινὰ τῶν καλούμενων χαρακτῆρων, σταυρῷ σημειῶ ἑμφερῆς, εὐκὲς χαραγμένοις τοῖς λίθοις ἀναφανῆναι. Παρ' ἐπιστημονῶν δὲ τα τοιαυτὰ ἐρμηνεύθεισαν σμῆναι ταυτὴν τὴν γραφὴν ΖΩΗΝ ΕΠΕΡΧΟΜΕΝΗΝ τούτο δὲ προφασίν Χριστιανισμοῦ πολλοῖς γενεσθαι τῶν ἑλληνιστῶν : καθότι καὶ γράμματα ἑτέρα τούτο τὸ εἶρῶ τέλος εἴσστιν ἰδῆλον, ἥνικα οὗτος ὁ χαρακτῆρ φανῇ. —Lib. 2, cap. 15.

“The Christians perceiving that this made very much for their religion, made great account thereof, and were not a little proud of it. When as by other hieroglyphical letters it was gathered, that the temple of Serapis should go to ruin when the sign of the cross therein engraven came to light (by that LIFE TO COME was foreshewed), many more embraced the Christian religion, confessed their sins, and were baptized. Thus much have I learned of the cross.”*—And thus far quote I from the Ecclesiastical History of Socrates, a Christian historian, who lived and wrote about A. D. 412, the contemporary of Damasus bishop of Rome, of Chrysostom of Constantinople, and of the events which he has here recorded. Though the god Serapis stood in so immediate a relation to the Nile, his worship was by no means confined to Egypt; he was worshipped not only in Egypt and in Greece, but also at Rome, and sometimes considered as one and the same as Jupiter Ammon, sometimes as identical with Pluto, Bacchus, Æsculapius, Osiris,† and Jesus Christ. It is certain, however, that his most magnificent temple was at *Alexandria* in Egypt, whence all our most distinguished Christian Fathers and writers derived their education; that the bishops of Serapis, as they alone were justly entitled to be called bishops of Alexandria, while Alexandria was a Pagan city, yet called themselves bishops of Christ; and though Christianity can in no reasonable sense be said to have been established in Alexandria while the temple of Serapis remained—and Tillemont admits that the very first Christian church that was ever built, of which history gives us any certain and express information, was founded by Gregory the wonder-worker, A. D. 244, or after that time‡,—yet have we an uninterrupted succession of bishops of Alexandria from the evangelist Mark, who we are required to believe was the first of them, downwards. The Jews, it seems, took Serapis to be identical with the patriarch Joseph the son of Sarah.§

In all the representations of the crucified King of the Jews that have come down to us, the essential requisites of the Egyptian hieroglyphic have been most religiously preserved. The ribs of the figure are almost breaking through his skin, and it seems doubtful whether the being

* Lib. 5, c. 18, p. 348. London Ed. anno 1649.

† Pomey De Diis Indiget, p. 268.

‡ Quoted in Lardner's Credibility, vol. i, p. 594.

§ Quasi Ioseph παρ.

so represented had died of hunger before he was nailed to the cross, or had expired under the inconveniences of that uncouth appointment. But the most extraordinary phenomenon attending this mystical personification, is, that his hieroglyphical history will be found to dove-tail exactly into all the various and apparently contradictory developements of the Christian theology. Thus the cross was *blessed*, but the figure upon it was made a *curse*; and accordingly, as it was the cross, or the crucified, that was referred to, so shall we find it, even in the same writings, spoken of as the blessed cross or the accursed cross, as a badge of honour or of shame, of joy or of sorrow, of triumph or of humiliation.



CHAPTER XXX.

THE TAURIBOLIA

WERE expiatory sacrifices, which were renewed every twenty years, and conferred the highest degree of holiness and sanctification on the partakers of those holy mysteries. Prudentius informs us, that in these religious ceremonies the Pagan priests, or whoever was ambitious of obtaining a mystical REGENERATION, excavated a pit, into which he descended. The pit was then covered over with planks, which were bored full of holes, so that the blood and *what not* of the goat, bull, or ram that was sacrificed upon them, might trickle through the holes upon the body of the person beneath; who, having been thus sanctified, and *born again*, was obliged ever after to walk in *newness of life*; to maintain a conduct of the most inflexible virtue; to *shew forth God's praise, not only with his lips, but in his life, by giving up himself to God's service; and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all his days.*

Potter, however, in his *Antiquities*, informs us, that the Athenians had a less offensive way than this to convey the spiritual blessedness of *regeneration*. The person desirous of it, whether male or female, was slipped through a characteristic part of the female habiliments, and thenceforth recognized as one who had been *born again*. The only observable coincidence of the Tauribolia with the great sacrifice of Christianity, consists in the fact, that the grossest sense of the terms in which the Pagan obscenity

can be described, finds its excuse, if not its sanctification, by its adoption into the text of our New Testament, where we read of "*the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel,*" (Heb. xii 24); and "*SPRINKLING of the blood of Jesus Christ,*" (1 Pet. i. 2). "And if the blood of bulls and goats, and the *what-not* of an heifer, *SPRINKLING* the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ purge your consciences."

Thus precisely the same effects of an imaginary spiritual regeneration are ascribed to precisely the same nasty ingredients—*blood, &c.*—used in precisely the same mode of application—*sprinkling*. It may be that we, of more civilized times, and more exalted ideas, have acquired the art of producing refined sweets out of these grossnesses; but we have no right to forget that our chemistry was entirely unknown to those to whom this language was at first propounded. They who were to be converted by it from their Paganism into the new religion, must have had the one put upon them in the place of the other, without their ever being able to perceive the difference.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BAPTISM.

THE Baptæ, or Baptists, were an effeminate and debauched order of priests, belonging to the goddess Cotytto, the *unchaste* Venus, in opposition and contradistinction to the celestial deity of that name, who was ever attended with the Graces, and whose worship tended to elevate and exalt the moral character, and to sanctify the commerce of generation with all that is delicate in sentiment and tender in affection. No worshipper of Venus could endure the thought of impurity. Neglect of the holiness which her rites enjoined was ever punished with degradation of mind and loss of beauty and health.* The Baptists are satirized by Juvenal. They take their name from their stated dippings and washings, by way of purification, though it seems

* The man after God's own heart exhibits himself as an awful instance of the vengeance of Venus on one who turned the grace of God (for Venus was addressed, "Be thou God," or Goddess) into lasciviousness: "My wounds stink and are corrupt, through my lasciviousness; neither is there any rest in my bones, by reason of my sin."—Psalm xxxviii.

they were dipped in warm water, and were to be made clean and pure, that they might wallow and defile themselves the more, as their nocturnal rites consisted chiefly of lascivious dances and other abominations. The Baptists, or Anabaptists, as they are called, continue as an order of religionists among Christians, under precisely the same name. The licentious character of the order of religionists from whom they are descended, has received its correction from the improved intelligence, and, consequently, improved morality of the times. But the most unquestionable evidence confirms the fact, that the Christian Baptists of Germany, in the fourteenth century, and sometime before and after, came short of no impurities that could have characterized the Antinomian priests of Cotyto.

ASTROLOGICAL CHARACTER OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

The character of John the *Baptist*, like all the other personages of the Gospel story, presents precisely the same analogy to the system of astronomy which we trace in every personification of the ancient heathenism. Like all the other genii or saints, he presides over his particular day, or, rather, in mythological language, is that day ; and, as if no room for doubt as to his identity should be left, the calendars attached to our church of England prayer-book have fixed that day as the 24th of June, the season peculiarly adapted to *baptisms* or *bathings*, precisely the day on which the sun has exhibited one degree of descent from his highest elevation, and which stands directly over and looks down upon the 25th of December, the day fixed for the birth of Christ, when he first appears to have gained one degree of ascent from his lowest declension. In exact accordance with which astronomical positions, we find the *genius* of the 24th of June (*St. John*) looking down upon the *genius* of the 25th of December (*the new born Jesus*), and saying, "He must increase, but I must decrease," (John iii. 30), as the days begin to lengthen from the 25th of December, and to decrease or shorten from the 24th of June downwards, till they reach the shortest, of which the *genius* or saint is the unbelieving Thomas.

The learned and ingenious historian of the Celtic Druids, of whose labours I have greatly availed myself, maintains that "the Essenes were descended from the prophet Elijah, and the Carmelite monks from the Essenes,

whose *monasteries* were established *before* the Christian era ; that these monks, finding that from time immemorial, a certain day had been held sacred to the god SOL, the *Sun*, as his birth-day, and that this god was distinguished by the epithet THE LORD, persuaded themselves that this LORD could be no other than their *Lord God* : whereupon they adopted the religious rites of this Lord, and his supposed birth-day, December the 25th, became a Christian festival, Paganism being thus spliced and amalgamated into Christianity." I only take the liberty of differing from this good Christian writer so far as to deny that there could be any splicing or amalgamation, where it was *all one piece*. The great sophism of Christianity consists in the pretence of a distinction where there was no difference.

ST. THOMAS

Stands on the 21st of December, in all the darkness of unbelief, and doubting whether his divine master, *the sun*, will ever *rise* again. In accordance with which astronomical sense, and in no other sense that divines can agree upon, we find Jesus, the genius of the Sun, in the 25th of Dec. telling the Pharisees, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see *my day*, and he saw it, and was glad." (John viii. 56.) It was the evident object of the writers of the sacred allegory, as it was of the mystagogues and contrivers of the Pagan system, to give an appearance of real personages, and of actual adventures and discourses, to the *prosopopeia*, under which they emblemized physical and moral truths. So that it is only incidentally, and when they are somewhat off their guard, that they let fall expressions entirely out of keeping with their general tenor ; and furnish to a wary observance, the key to the occult and real sense which eludes, and was intended to elude the tractable simplicity of the faithful. At the same time, nothing is more obvious, than that the failure of invention, or fissures in the weaving of the allegory, would be from time to time patched up with pieces of real circumstances, *actual adventures*, and indistinct reminiscences of conversations that had indeed occurred ; till the fabricators themselves had become unable to distinguish what they had remembered from what they had invented. But who, but one who held it a virtue to be stupid, could drop the clue to the allegory put into his hand by such passages as (Eph. iv. 9), "Now that he ascended, what is it but that

he also descended first into *the lower parts of the earth* ? He that descended is the same also that ascended ?” This descent *into the lower parts of the earth*, will apply to no sense of the actual burial of a man upon a level with the earth’s surface, or not ten feet below it, but is *strictly* applicable to the sun’s descent below the horizon, by an equable division of day and night, “*to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death.*”

The Pagan philosophers pretended that their theology, and the genealogy of their gods, did originally, in an allegorical sense, mean the several parts of nature and the universe. Cicero gives a large account of this, and tells us, that even the *impious* fables relating to the deities include in them a good physical meaning. Thus, when Saturn was said to have devoured his children, it was to be understood of *Time*, which is properly said to devour all things. “We know,” says this great heathen, “that the shapes of all the gods, their age, habits, and ornaments, nay, their very genealogy, marriages, and every thing relating to them, hath been delivered in the exact resemblance to human weakness. It is,” he adds, “the height of folly to believe such absurd and extravagant things.”

Did any of them ever believe any thing more absurd ? Did the annals of human folly or madness ever record any thing more extravagant, than that new born children should be considered to have offended God, or that a full-grown fool should be believed to please him, by washing his dirty hide, and suffering a gawky idiot to talk nonsense over the ceremony ?

As an allegorical sense was the apology offered for the manifest absurdities of Paganism, and an allegorical sense is challenged for the contents of the New Testament, not only by the early Fathers, but *by and in* the text of that New Testament itself,* can it be denied that both alike are allegorical ? And both being confessedly allegorical, the innumerable instances of perfect resemblance between them are a competent proof that the one is but a modification or improved edition of the other, and that there never was any real or essential difference between them.

* Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit ; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”—2 Cor. iii. 6.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES ; OR, SACRAMENT OF THE
LORD'S SUPPER :

WAS the most august of all the Pagan ceremonies celebrated, more especially by the Athenians, every fifth year, in honour of *Ceres*, the goddess of corn, who, in allegorical language, had given us *her flesh to eat* ; as *Bacchus*, the god of wine, in a like sense, had given us *his blood to drink* ; though both these mysticisms are claimed by Jesus Christ, (John vi. 55.) They were celebrated every fifth year at Eleusis, a town of Attica, from whence their name ; which name, however, both in the word and in the signification of it, is precisely the same as one of the titles of Jesus Christ.* From these ceremonies, in like manner, is derived the very name attached to our Christian sacrament of the Lord's supper—" *those holy mysteries* ;" and not one or two, but absolutely *all* and *every one* of the observances used in our Christian solemnity. Very many of our forms of expression in that solemnity are precisely the same as those that appertained to the Pagan rite. Nor, notwithstanding all we hear of the rapid propagation of Christianity, and the conversion of Constantine, were these heathen mysteries abolished, till the reign of the elder Theodosius, who had the honour of instituting the INQUISITION, which was so great an improvement upon them, in their stead, about the year 440.

Mosheim acknowledges, that " the primitive Christians† gave the name of *mysteries* to the institutions of the Gospel, and decorated particularly the holy sacrament with that title ; that they used *the very terms* employed in the heathen mysteries, and adopted some of the rites and ceremonies of which those renowned mysteries consisted. This imitation began in the eastern provinces ; but, after the time of Adrian, who first introduced the mysteries among the Latins, it was followed by the Christians who dwelt in the western parts of the empire. A great part, therefore, of the service of the church in this century (the second) had a certain air of the heathen mysteries, and resembled them considerably in many particulars."

* *Εὐσεὶ ο ἐρχόμενος*—" Art thou the *he that should come* ?"—John xi. 3. *Ἐλευσις*, the Advent, or *coming*, from the common root.

† Mosheim, vol. 1, p. 204.

ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES

CHRISTIAN SACRAMENT

Compared.

1. "But as the benefit of initiation was great, such as were convicted of witchcraft, murder, even though unintentional, or any other heinous crimes, were debarred from those mysteries."—*Bell's Panth. in loco quo res.*

2. At their entrance, purifying themselves by washing their hands in holy water, they were at the same time admonished to present themselves with pure minds, without which the external cleanness of the body would by no means be accepted.

3. The priests who officiated in these sacred solemnities, were called Hierophants, or *revealers of holy things*.

4. After this, they were dismissed in these words :—

Κοιξ Ομπαξ.

1. "For as the benefit is great, if, with a true penitent heart and lively faith, we receive that holy sacrament; &c. if any be an open and notorious evil-liver, or hath done wrong to his neighbour, &c. that he presume not to come to the Lord's table."—*Communion Service.*

2. See the fonts of holy water at the entrance of every catholic chapel in Christendom for the purpose.

Let us draw near with a true heart, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.—Heb. x. 22.

3. Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.—1 Cor. iv. 1.

4. In English, thus :—

The Lord be with you.

If it were possible to be mistaken in the significance of the monogram of Bacchus, the I H S, to whose honour, in conjunction with CERES, these *holy mysteries* were distinctively dedicated, the insertion of those letters in a circle of *rays of glory*, over the centre of the holy table, is an hieroglyphic that depends not on the fallibility of translation, but conveys a sense that cannot be misread by any eye on which the sun's light shines. I H S are Greek characters, by ignorance taken for Roman letters; and **YES**, which is the proper reading of those letters, is none other than the very identical name of BACCHUS, that is, of the SUN, of which BACCHUS was one of the most distinguished personifications; And YES, or IES, with the Latin termination *us*, added to it, is *Jesus*. The surrounding rays of glory, as expressive of the sun's light, make the identity of Christ and Bacchus as clear as the sun.

These *rays of glory* are a sort of universal letter that cannot be misread or misinterpreted; no written lan-

guage, no words that man could utter, could so distinctly, so expressively say that it was the SUN, and nothing but the Sun, that was so emblemized. And these rays are seen alike surrounding the heads of the Indian CHREESHNA, as he is exhibited in the beautiful plate engraved by Barlow, and inscribed to the Archbishop of Canterbury ; round the Grecian Apollo ; and in all our pictures of Jesus Christ. Nay, more—the epithet THE LORD, as we have seen, was peculiarly and distinctively appropriate to the SUN, and to all personifications of the Sun ; so that the SUN and the LORD were perfectly synonymous, and *Sun's day* and the *Lord's day* the same to every nation on whom his light hath shone.

As it was especially to the honour of Bacchus, as the SUN, that the mysteries were celebrated, so the *bread and wine* which the Lord (or Sun) had *commanded to be received*, was called *the Lord's supper*. Throughout the whole ceremony, the name of the *Lord* was many times repeated, and his brightness or *glory*, not only exhibited to the eye by the rays which surrounded his name, but was made the peculiar theme or subject of their triumphant exultation. Now bring we up our most sacred Christian ordinance ! That also is designated, as the ceremony in honour of Bacchus was, *the Lord's supper*. In that also all other epithets of the deity so honoured, are merged in the peculiar appropriation of the term THE LORD. It would sound irreverently, even in Christian ears, to call it Jesus's supper, or Jesus's table ; it is always termed the *Lord's*. And as in the Lord's supper of the ancient idolators at Eleusis, it was the benefit which they received from the sun's rays or glory that were commemorated, so in our Christian orgies, it is the glory or *brightness* of the same deity which is peculiarly symbolized and honoured. A poor Jewish peasant never was, nor could have been called the LORD. Let us take words according to the *meaning* of words, and not suffer our reason to be sophisticated by mere sounds, which have in themselves no meaning at all, and we shall see that our English word GLORY is but a ridiculously sonorous mouthing of its original, CLARY. The exact meaning of *clary* is *brightness* ; the attribute of *brightness* is peculiarly characteristic of the SUN : use only the meaning of the word, instead of its unmeaning sound, wherever it occurs, and the hellotrous sense and origination of our Christian Communion Service, and its absolute identity with the Pagan myste-

ries of Eleusis, can no longer evade detection ; for thus run the Eleusinian and the Christian mysteries, like linked horses in a chariot, step for step, and phrase for phrase, together.

THE DOXOLOGY.

“ Brightness be to God on high ! We praise thee, we brighten thee (that is, we say that thou art bright), we give thee thanks for thy great brightness. Heaven and earth are full of thy brightness. Brightness be to thee, O Lord (that is, O Sun) most high ! ”

Is not this the real, the only sense, of *both* mysteries ? If it be not, our ignorance has, at least, one consolation : we shall not have to quarrel with any body who can tell us what is ! Safe enough are we from any thing like an *idea* on the part of the partakers of those holy mysteries : a sensible person who had received the sacrament, might be shown for a week afterwards at the menagerie.

PAGAN MYTHOLOGY

CHRISTIAN REVELATION

Compared.

1. *Titan*, the eldest of the children of heaven, yielded to Saturn the kingdom of the world, provided he raised no more children ; but on the birth of Jupiter, he rebelled, and raising war in heaven, prevailed not, neither was his place found any more in heaven. He and all his host of rebel angels were cast out, and imprisoned under mountains heaped upon them. Their vain attempts to rise is the supposed cause of earthquakes and volcanoes.

“ Or from our sacred hill, with fury thrown,
Deep in the dark Tartarean gulph
shall groan.”

*Jupiter's threat to the inferior gods,
Iliad, 6. Pope's Version.*

2. Latona was driven out of heaven, and having been got with child by Jupiter, without knowledge of a man, she brought forth her son, our Lord and Saviour Phœbus-Apollo, “ the

1. Satan, the eldest of the children of heaven, yielded to Jehovah the kingdom of the world, provided he raised no more children ; but on the birth of Messiah, he rebelled, and raising war in heaven, “ prevailed not, neither was his place found any more in heaven,” (Rev. xii. 8.) “ And the angels which kept not their first estate, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.”—Jude 6.

“ God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell.”—2 Pet. ii. 4. Note well ! the original word signifies TARTARUS.

2. Eve was driven out of Paradise, and in her representative Mary, “ seeing she knew not a man,” brought forth her son, our Lord Jesus Christ, “ being the brightness of his glory, and

PAGAN MYTHOLOGY

CHRISTIAN REVELATION

Compared.

brightness of his father's glory," and the express image of his person. She was, at the time of her delivery, refused a place where to bring forth, and was persecuted all her life by the dragon Python.

3. Her son at length slew the Python, and was by Jupiter exalted with great triumph unto his kingdom in heaven.

Another edition.

4. Jupiter transforms himself into a swan, and in that shape enjoys Leda, a married woman, who became with child by him.

5. The incarnation of Vichnou.

6. The Logos, or *Word* of God, an epithet of Mercury.—*Justin Martyr's Apology.*

7. Unum pro multis dabitur caput, (*Virgil.*)—i. e. *One head shall be given as the redemption for many.*

8. "The Vandals had a god called *Triglas*; one of those was found at Herlungerberg, near Brandenburg. He was represented with three heads.—This was apparently the *Trinity of Paganism.*" Such are the very words of the orthodox Christian, Parkhurst.

the express image of his person," (Heb. i. 3,) "she laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn," (Luke ii. 7.) "And the dragon persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child."—Rev. xii. 13.

3. And the seed of the woman bruised the serpent's head, "and her child was caught up to God, and to his throne."—Rev. xii. 5.

Another edition.

4. Jehovah, in the shape of a pigeon, *obumbrates* the wife of Joseph, who becomes with child by him.—Luke i.*

5. The incarnation of Christ.

6. The Logos, or *Word* of God, an epithet of Jesus Christ.—*St. John's Gospel.*

7. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Heb. ix. 28.

8. "To God the Father, Son, And Spirit, ever blest—
Eternal Three in One—
All worship be addrest."
Such are the words of the orthodox Christian Doxology.

* The editors of the Unitarian New Version of the New Testament, who very modestly wish to shovel all these spurcities and salacities out of the sacred text, have the impudence to tell us, in a note, that they were interpolated to lessen the odium attached to Christianity, from its founder being a crucified Jew, and to elevate him to the dignity of the heroes and demi-gods of the heathen mythology. So then, the argument of the primitive Christians with their Pagan opponents was good-natured enough—*If you won't adopt our religion,—why, we'll adopt yours.*

PAGAN MYTHOLOGY

CHRISTIAN REVELATION

Compared.

9. The ancient Gauls had an idol, under the name *Hesus*, who, the mythologists say, answered to the Roman Mars, or Lord of Hosts, to whom they used to sacrifice their captives taken in war ; of whom *Lucan*, book 1, line 445.

Horrensque feris altaribus Hesus !

Hesus, with cruel altars, horrid god !

9. The difference between *Hesus* and *Jesus* is but a breath.

"The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of Glory."—Psalm xxiv. 10.

"Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ !"—*Te Deum*, 14.

"Thou shalt bruise them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces, like a potter's vessel."—Psalm ii. 9.

"And he was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood."—Rev. xix. 13.

"Thus have I attempted to trace, with a confidence continually increasing as I advanced, a parallel between the gods adored in Greece, Italy, and India ; but which was the original system, and which the copy, I will not presume to decide. I am persuaded, however, that a connection existed between the old idolatrous nations of Egypt, India, Greece, and Italy, long before the birth of Moses."

So concludes the pious Sir William Jones, *Asiatic Researches*, vol. 1, p. 271. The reader is to conclude as he pleases.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PYTHAGORAS, B. C. 586.

As all ideas of man are derived from his senses, and consequently may be traced to their origination from that their only source, the gods and goddesses, or any god that conceit could form to itself, would still admit of being referred to its primordial type in something the like of which experience had first been impressed on the senses. Having found innumerable pre-existent models of the imaginary supernatural character of Christ. we discover in the Samian sage every thing that could have furnished forth the calmer and more philosophic personification of Unitarian Christianity, the mere man Jesus.

Pythagoras, as his name signifies, had been born under precisely the circumstances ascribed to Jesus Christ ; having been the object of a splendid dispensation of pro-

phēcy, and had his birth foretold by Apollo Pythus; his soul having descended from its primæval state of companionship with the divine Apollo, "*the glory which he had with the father, before the world was.*"—John vii. 5.

Divesting his story, however, of the supernatural superstructure that could be as easily pretended for any one extraordinary character as for any other; it remains *historically* certain, that this first of philosophers, and most distinguished individual of the human race, was a *real* character, and was born at Samos, in Greece, (from whence his epithet, the Samian sage,) in the third year of the 48th Olympiad—that is, 586 years before the epocha of the pretended birth of his Galilean rival. He was educated under Pherecydes, of Syrus, of whom Cicero speaks, as the first who inculcated the doctrine of the distinct existence and immortality of the soul; and afterwards became the distinguished pupil of the priests of Egypt.—The limits of this work admit not of our dwelling on any further particulars of his history, than those in which he presents the most clear and unquestionable type of the character afterwards set forth to the world under the *prosopopeia* generally designated as *Jesus Christ*.

Pythagoras is most characteristically associated with the doctrine which he taught, and which takes its name from him,—the *Pythagorean Metempsychosis*.* After his master had broached the notion of the existence and immortality of souls, it was but a second and a necessary step, to find some employment for them; and that of their eternal migration from one body to another, after every effort that imagination can make, will be found at least as consistent with reason as that of their existence at all, and that in which the mind, after all its plunges into the vast unknown, must ultimately acquiesce.†

"Eternity! thou pleasing, dreadful thought!
Through what variety of untried being,
Through what new scenes and changes must we pass!
The wide, th' unbounded prospect lies before us;
But shadows, clouds, and darkness, rest upon it!

Addison's Cato.

Pythagoras, however, left behind him more substantial evidence of real wisdom, and of actual benefits conferred

* *Μετεμψυχωσις*, the transmigration of the soul out of one body into another, from *μετα* and *ψυχη*, the life, the breath, the wit, the soul, the *je-ne-sais-quoi*.

† The Metempsychosis overthrows the doctrine of the everlasting torments of hell-fire; and, on that account, is less congenial to *Christian* dispositions.

upon mankind, than were ever challenged for the imaginary successor of his honours. He is generally and indisputably held to be the discoverer of the celebrated forty-ninth theorem of the first book of Euclid ; which demonstrates that the square of the hypotenuse of the right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of its sides ; and to have first laid down that theory of the planetary system which, after having been laid aside, or forgotten through all the intervening ages of Christian ignorance, has been revived, and shown to be the true and real system, by the discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton, and subsequent demonstrations of all succeeding astronomers. Had any thing like evidence of this nature been adducible for the pretensions of Jesus of Nazareth, there would not have been an infidel in Christendom.

Pythagoras was a teacher of the purest system of morals ever propounded to man. He has the merit (let grateful women apportion his praise) of having first claimed and achieved for the fair sex, their distinction of dress from that of men, and their title to that more tender respect and exalted courtesy which none worthy the name of men will ever withhold from them. He abated the ferocity of war, and taught and induced mankind to extend feelings of humanity and tenderness to the whole brute creation. His personal beauty surpassed whatever else had been seen in humanity ; his voice was the richest music that ever sounded on the human ear, and his powers of suasion were absolutely irresistible. The Christian Fathers taunt his vanity, and ridicule his claims to supernatural memory ; but it is certain that Pythagoras has himself ascribed his memory to the especial favour of heaven, and held the happiest endowments ever possessed by man with the utmost meekness in himself, and to the greatest possible profit to mankind. His notions of the Deity will challenge comparison with any that enrich the pages of Christian Scripture. The principle of *self-examination*, which he inculcated on his disciples, as we see in the *golden verses* ascribed to him, is far from being compatible with so proud a spirit, as his mighty reason to be proud might tempt our envy to ascribe to him ; or if the genuineness of those verses, which at any rate are from no Christian mint, be disputable, the short and pithy axiom which Clemens Alexandrinus acknowledges to have been characteristically *his*, must for ever number him among those who have thought of the Deity so as none of the human race, whe-

ther without the aid of revelation or with it, have ever thought more worthily—"None but God is wise," said Pythagoras.

Pythagoras himself was certainly not the inventor of the doctrine of the Metempsychosis, but learned it of the Egyptian monks, in whose college he was long a resident, and of whose ecclesiastical fraternity he was unquestionably a member; he only inculcated this doctrine more earnestly, and endeavoured to *weld* it, as he did other superstitions which he found too deeply rooted to be eradicated, to useful, or at least innocent and inoffensive applications.

The Christian doctrines of original sin, and of the necessity of being *born again*, are evident misunderstandings of the doctrine of the Pythagorean Metempsychosis, which constituted the *inward spiritual grace*, or essential significance of the Eleusinian mysteries; as the classical reader will find those mysteries sublimely treated of in the 6th book of Virgil's *Æneid*. The term of migration during which the soul of man was believed to expiate in other forms the deeds done in its days of humanity, was exactly *a thousand years*; after which, drinking of the waters of Lethe, which caused a forgetfulness of all that had passed, it was ferryed down the river, or sailed under the conduct of Mercury, the Logos, or *Word of God*, and "*wind and tide serving*," was so borne or carried, and *born of water and wind*,* and launched again into humanity, for a fresh experiment of moral probation. Hence souls that had acquitted themselves but ill in their previous existence, were believed to be *born in sin*, and to have brought with them the remains of a corrupt nature derived from their former state, for which they were still further punished by the calamitous circumstances in which they were born, or the difficulties with which they should still have to contend, till they should ultimately recover themselves to virtue and happiness. This was the doctrine, and nothing but this, which Christ is represented as endeavouring to inculcate upon Nicodemus the ruler of the Jews; and for his ignorance and gross apprehensions of which, he so tartly rallies that Jewish rabbi—"Art thou

* Our English of the words *εαν μη τις γεννηθη εξ υδατος και πνευματος*—"Except a man be born of water and of the spirit," (John iii. 5,) and of the words *οτις εστι πας ο γεγεννημενος εκ τη πνευματος*—"So is every one that is born of the spirit," (John iii. 8,) is a jesuitical imposition upon the simplicity of the mere English reader. The real rendering is, "*born of the WIND, or PUFF.*" So the Holy GHOST should be rendered the Holy PUFF. Note, nothing makes a man so *spiritually-minded* as wind at the stomach.

a MASTER of Israel, and knowest not these things?"—John iii. 10. It must be stupidity itself that could dream of any reason or propriety in rebuking the Jewish ruler for not knowing these things, if they were matters then *first* revealed, or not so common as that no well-educated person had any excuse for being ignorant of them.

In John ix. 2, the disciples are represented as propounding to Jesus a question which would never have occurred but to minds entirely possessed of the Pythagorean doctrine—"Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" which the Master (the characteristic epithet of Pythagoras) answers precisely as Pythagoras might have done—"Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents," &c. While the Jews imagine themselves to launch the severest invective against the blind man, in holding his being born blind as a proof that he must have been a very wicked wretch in some pre-existent state: "*Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?*"—John ix. 34.

In Matthew xvii. 14, we find the Pharisees represented, according to the Pythagorean doctrines, as saying that Jesus was Elias; and in Matthew xviii. 13, Jesus himself, so far from discountenancing that doctrine, confirms it, by giving his disciples to understand that John the Baptist was the soul of Elias come again in the person of that prophet.

But the ninetieth Psalm, selected to be read as a part of our Burial Service, is entirely Pythagorean, and delivers the doctrine of the Metempsychosis too particularly to be mistaken, or to admit of any other possible understanding:

"Lord, thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another;" that is, in every state of existence through which we have already passed.

"Thou turnest man to destruction: again thou sayest, Come again, ye children of men."*

"For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday; seeing that is passed as a watch in the night."

"Comfort us again now, after the time that thou hast plagued us, and for the years wherein we have suffered adversity," &c.

Be it remembered, that the exact length of the Pythagorean term of migration was a thousand years; and surely

* Observe how evidently this is the language of quotation. Some word of God, or from some sacred scripture which had reported his word, before either the New or Old Testament had been imposed upon human credulity.

no argument could seem so well calculated to console and comfort the mind under the fear of death, or for the loss of friends, as the persuasion thus inculcated, that the period of separation would pass but as a watch in the night, and that, upon their next return into humanity, they should be comforted in proportion to all the adversity that they had gone through in their present condition.

That Pythagoras should have adopted this whimsical but sublime theory, as the basis of a purer system of morality, or rather, perhaps, made the best of a system which he found too deeply-rooted in men's minds to admit of being safely disturbed; that he should have followed that allegorical and ænigmatical mode of conveying metaphysical speculations* and moral truths which characterized his age and country, thereby subjecting himself and his theories to the ridicule that must necessarily attach to all allegories and figurations, whose significancy can no longer be traced; that he should have descended to the juggling tricks of pretended communications with the Deity; that he should have deceived mankind in so many particulars in which it cannot be denied that he was a deceiver, and have degraded his great wisdom by a conjunction with as great folly; has its full apology in the simple statement, Pythagoras was a *man*; and with all his imperfections on his head, we shall look among the race of men, for his better, in vain, yea, for his equal, or his second, but in vain.

Pythagoras was entirely a Deist, a steady maintainer of the unity of God, and of the eternal obligations of moral virtue. No Christian writings, even to this day, can compete in sublimity and grandeur with what this illustrious philosopher has laid down concerning God, and the end of all our actions; and it is likely, says Bayle, that he would have carried his orthodoxy much farther, had he had the courage to expose himself to martyrdom.

The circumstances of the death of Pythagoras are variously reported. He lived at Crotona, in Milo's house, with his disciples, and was burnt in it. A man whom he refused to admit into his society, set the house on fire.

According to Dicæarchus, he fled to the temple of the muses at Metapontum, and died there of hunger. See upon this subject the learned collections of Menagius. Arnobius

* His religious respect or antipathy to *beans*, were the circumstance diversified of Christian exaggeration, or we were possessed of the clue, might admit of as rational an unravelling as the Egyptian worship of onions. See this *DIGRESSION*, p. 28. Aristoxenus assures us that Pythagoras would often eat beans, his religious conceits notwithstanding.

affirms that he was burned alive in a temple ; others state that he was slain in attempting to make his escape.

It can hardly be doubted that his death was violent, notwithstanding the divine honours paid to him afterwards, and that, with all that he did to deceive mankind, or rather perhaps to preserve himself, he fell at last a martyr to his generous efforts to *undeceive* them.

The strongest type of resemblance or coincidence with the apostolic story, which the history of the Samian sage presents is, that the Egyptian Therapeuts boasted of his name as a member of their monastic institution ; and that Pythagoras certainly made his disciples live in common, and that they renounced their property in their patrimony, and that “ *as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet ; and distribution was made to every man according as he had need.* ”—Acts iv. 35.

An ill construction was put upon their union, and it proved very fatal to them. That society of students being looked upon as a faction which conspired against the state, sixty of them were destroyed, and the rest ran away. “ Three hundred young men,” says Justin, “ formed into a society by a kind of oath, lived together by themselves, and were looked upon as a private faction by the state, who intended to burn them as they were assembled in one house. Almost sixty of them perished in the tumult, and the rest went into banishment.” This event, however, appears not to have occurred till some time after the death of their divine master.

Let the reader compare these historical facts with the story of the Holy Ghost descending in the shape of fire upon the heads of the apostles, when *they were all with one accord in one place*, and their subsequent dispersion, as detailed in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, so grossly fabulous, and so monstrously absurd, that there is not in the present day a Christian minister, who dare bring the subject before the contemplation of his hearers ; and then let him give to Christianity the benefit of all the doubt he shall entertain that these facts are not the basis of that fiction.—See his Creed, and *Golden Verses*, in our chapter SPECIMENS OF PAGAN PIETY.

So conscious are the Christian Fathers of the superiority of Pythagoras in every respect, that they endeavour to show that he was a *Jew* ;* that he had been an imme-

* Imo fuere qui Nazaratum Pythagoræ præceptorem idem hic est cum Zabrato, ipsum esse Ezechielem prophetam tradiderant. Ex populo Judæorum genus

diate disciple of the Jewish prophet Ezekiel ; that he, as well as Pherecydes, Thales, Solon, and Plato, had learned the doctrine of the true God, not only among the Egyptians, but from the Hebrews themselves.

In the account which the emperor Constantine gives of the matter, in his oration to the holy congregation of the clergy, Pythagoras, to be sure, is an impostor, inasmuch as that "those things which the prophets had foretold, he delivered to the Italians as if God had particularly revealed them to him."*

Lactantius, however, admits, and expresses his wonder, that when Pythagoras, and afterwards Plato, incited by the love of seeking truth, had travelled as far as to the Egyptians, the Magi, and the Persians, to learn the rites and ceremonies of those nations, they should never have consulted the Jews, with whom alone the true wisdom was to be found, and to whom they might have gone more readily."† *The Jews!!—Paugh!*

"Of the vast variety of religions which have prevailed at different times in the world, perhaps there was no one that has been more general than that of the Metempsychosis. It continued to be believed by the early Christian Fathers, and by several sects of Christians.

"As much as this doctrine is now scouted, it was held not only by almost all the great men of antiquity, but a late very ingenious writer, philosopher, and Christian apologist, avowed his belief in it, and published a defence of it; namely, the late Soame Jenyns."—*Higgins' Celtic Druids*, pp. 283, 284.

It is not, indeed, rational; but what metaphysical speculation of any sort is so? Had it been more frightful, it would have been more orthodox.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

ARCHBISHOP TILLOTSON'S CONFESSION OF THE IDENTITY OF CHRISTIANITY AND PAGANISM.‡

As it is really too much to be believed, and we wish to draw on no man's confidence who may have the means of cer-

duxisse Pythagoram, plerosque arbitrare scribit Ambrosius.—Kortholli Pagan. Obiect. p. 48. Φασι δε ουτως εν αιγυπτω ε μονον παρ' αιγυπτων, αλλα και παρ Εβραιων, τα περι τε ουτως διδασθηναι δεσ.—Theodoritus Therapeut. lib. 8.

* Constantine's Oration, c. 9.

† Soleo admirari quod cum Pythagoras et postea Plato amore indagandæ veritatis accensi, ad Ægyptios et Magos, et Persas usque penetrassent, at earum gentium ritum et sacra cognoscerent—ad Judæos tantum non accesserint, penes quos tunc solus erat, et quo facilius ire potuissent—*Divin. Inst. lib. 4, cap. 2.*

‡ For the "Life of Archbishop Tillotson," see Wadsworth's Ecclesiastical

tifying himself, that the highest dignitary of the church of England, the brightest ornament it ever had, and the honestest man that ever received honour from it, or reflected honour on it, should so have *given tongue*, so have confessed the whole cheat, betrayed his craft, and yielded every thing that philosophy could aim to conquer; I give the "*litera scripta*," the "*ipsissima verba*," the *written letter*, the *very words themselves*, which will be found in the forty-sixth of the "fifty-four sermons and discourses which were published by his Grace himself;" this being the second of the two entitled "*Concerning the Incarnation of our blessed Saviour*;" on the text (John i. 14), "*The Word was made flesh*;" and preached in the church of St. Lawrence Jewry, Dec. 28, 1680;* occurring in the fourth volume, 8vo, of Woodhouse's edition, A. D. 1744; and of that volume, p. 143. It is remarkable, that, even so long ago, mankind were not quite so stupid as not to scent out the latitant *waggery* of these discourses, which would have gone nigh to have cost an ecclesiastic of humbler rank his ears in the pillory, or at least a year or two in Oakham Jail. The *mitred* infidel, however, in an advertisement to the reader, informs us, that "the true reason of publishing these discourses, was not the importunity of *friends*, but the importunate clamours and malicious calumnies of *others*, whom he heartily prays God to forgive, and give them better minds." Amen.

Some Account of the Christian Dispensation.

"The third and last thing which I proposed upon this argument of the *Incarnation* of the *Son of God*, was to give some account of this dispensation, and to show that the wisdom of God thought fit thus to order things, in great condescension to the weakness and common prejudices of mankind.—†

"And it is the more necessary to give some account of this matter, because after all that hath hitherto been said

Biography. An Essay on his Character and Writings, constitutes the fifteenth of the author's fifty LETTERS FROM OAKHAM, and will be found in the 21st number of the 1st volume of THE LION.

* The characteristic distinction between Archbishop Tillotson and other archbishops and bishops, those of our own times more especially, is, that he was foolish enough to commit himself by public preaching, which our modern bishops, on the principle "*least said soonest mended*," know better than to do; and that though he was withal a *very* bishop, he was an honestest man than any of them; and, God knows, that's no compliment.

† The reader will observe, that the hyphen, thus, —, is inserted, to indicate that the sentence is relieved of its prolixity: not a syllable is added, nor one omitted, that in the least degree could qualify the sense.

in answer to the objections against it,* it may still seem very strange to a considering man,† that God, who could without all this circumstance and condescension have *done the business*,‡ should yet have made choice of this way," &c.

"But since God hath been pleased to pitch upon this way rather than any other, this surely ought to be reason enough, whether the particular reasons of it appear to us or not.§"—p. 144.

"Secondly, I consider, in the next place, that in several revelations which God hath made of himself to mankind, he hath, with great condescension, accommodated himself to the condition and capacity, and other circumstances, of the persons and people to whom they were made. For the religion and laws which God gave them (*i. e.* the Jewish nation) were far from being the best (indeed!). God gave them *statutes which were not good*, that is, very imperfect in comparison of what he could and would have given them had they been capable of them.||—p. 145.

"Thirdly, I observe yet further, that though the Christian religion, as to the main and substance of it, be a most perfect institution, yet, upon a due consideration of things, it cannot be denied, that the manner and circumstances of this dispensation are full of condescension to the weakness of mankind, and very much accommodated to the most common and deeply radicated prejudices of men.¶

"But in history and fact, this is certain, that some notions, and those very gross and erroneous, did almost universally prevail; and though some of these were much more tolerable than others, yet God seems to have had great consideration of some very weak and gross apprehensions of mankind concerning religion. And as in some of the laws given by Moses, God was pleased particularly to consider the hardness of the hearts of that people; so he seems likewise to have very much suited the dispensation of the Gospel, and the method of our salvation, by

* Which is, being *interpreted*—All that has been said in answer to the objections, has been very jejune and unsatisfactory.

† Which is, being *interpreted*—It is considering men who are the infidels.

‡ Which is, being *interpreted*—Much ado about nothing.

§ Which is, being *interpreted*, "Shut your eyes, and open your mouth, and see what God will send you."

|| This might have been fair play, provided God himself was *not able* to enlarge or improve their capacity.

¶ Which is, being *interpreted*—The Christian religion, even as to the main and substance of it, is full of nonsense and barbarity, and only suited to the brutal apprehensions of savages and fools.

the incarnation and sufferings of his Son, to the common prejudices of mankind, especially of the heathen world, whose minds were less prepared for this dispensation than the Jews.*

"That God hath done this in the dispensation of the Gospel, will, I think, very plainly appear in the following instances.—p. 147.

"1st, The world was much given to admire mysteries,† most of which were either very odd and fantastical, or very lewd and impure, or very inhuman and cruel. But the great mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, was such a mystery as did obscure and swallow up all other mysteries. Since the world had such an admiration for mysteries, *that* was a mystery indeed—a mystery beyond all dispute, and beyond all comparison.‡—p. 48.

"2dly, There was likewise a great inclination in mankind to the worship of a *visible Deity*, (so) God was pleased to appear in our nature, that they who were so fond of a visible Deity might have one, even a true and natural image of God the Father, the express image of his person.§

"3dly, Another *notion* which has generally obtained among mankind, was concerning the expiation of the sins of men, and appeasing the offended Deity by sacrifice—upon which they supposed the punishment due to the sinner was transferred—to exempt him from it, especially by the sacrifices of men.||—p. 148. And with this general

* Good God ! could a bishop in stronger significancy discover his heartfelt hatred of Christianity. He held Christians to be more hard-hearted than the Jews themselves, and so God suited his religion to their hard-heartedness.

† Compare with the chapter Eleusinian Mysteries, and with Admissions of Christian Writers, p. 52, No. 51, in this *DIALOGUE*.

‡ O spirit of Voltaire ! Was ever sarcasm on earth more sarcastic ? Was it in plainer language that an Archbishop of Canterbury could have told us, that the Christian religion was the oddest, the lewdest, and the bloodiest that ever was upon earth, "beyond all dispute, and beyond all comparison ?"

§ This was the Spaniard Cortes's way of converting the Mexicans, when he threw down their image of the SUN, and unfurled a picture of the Virgin Mary in its stead, with a—"There, you dogs, an' you must have something to worship, worship that !"—*History of America*.

And thus in the original *Acts of the Apostles*, written by Abdias Bishop of Babylon, who professes to have been ordained by the Apostles themselves, we have it related, that the blessed Saint Philip the Evangelist, preaching to the Scythians, exclaimed, "*Throw down this Mars and break him, and in the place in which he seems to stand fixed, set up the Cross of my Lord Jesus Christ, and worship that.*"—*Dejicite hunc Martem et coufringite, et in loco in quo fixus videtur stare, crucem Domini mei Jesu Christi affigite, et hanc adorete.* *Fabricii Cod. Apocryp.* tom. 2, in hac re.

|| That is, God was pleased to approve and sanction human sacrifices. And what was the difference between this God and Moloch ? *His Grace*, however

notion of mankind, God was pleased so far to comply, as once for all to have a general atonement made for the sins of all mankind, by the sacrifice of his only Son, whom his wise providence did *permit by wicked hands to be crucified and slain.*

“4thly, Another very common notion, and very rife in the heathen world, and a great source of their idolatry, was their apotheosis, or canonizing of famous and eminent persons, by advancing them after their death to the dignity of an inferior kind of gods, fit to be worshipped by men here on earth, &c. Now, to take men off from this kind of idolatry, and to put an end to it, behold! one in our nature exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, to be worshipped by men and angles; one that *was dead and is alive again, and lives for evermore to make intercession for us.**

“5thly, The world was mightily bent upon addressing their requests and supplications, not to the Deity immediately; but by some mediators between the gods and them. In a gracious compliance with this common apprehension, God was pleased to constitute and appoint *One* in our nature to be a perpetual advocate and intercessor in heaven for us, *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh;*† so very nearly allied and related to us, (that) we may easily believe that he hath a most tender care and concernment for us, if we ourselves, by our own wilful obstinacy, do not hinder it; for if we be resolved to continue impenitent, there is no help for us; we must die in our sins, and salvation itself cannot save us.” (p. 152)—Thus far his Grace of Canterbury.

The reader is requested to compare this language throughout, with the avowals of Mosheim, the apologies

has the most explicit texts of the *New Testament* on his side, (and no rational man will ever have a word to say against the *Old Testament*): “*For if the blood, of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ,*” &c. ? Heb. ix. 13.—The force of the whole argument is,—the more monstrously horrible, the more cruel, barbarous, and bloody, the more sanctifying efficacy in the sacrifice, and the more acceptable to this HORRID GOD.

* Perhaps this is the severest irony, the most caustic sarcasm; that was ever couched in words. It is the “*Shew ’em in here,*” and “*All alive O!*” of Bartholomew Fair. It is—“*Our tricks beat theirs!*” It is—“*The fools! the idiots! nothing can be too gross for ’em.*”

† This is good, honest, downright *materialism*. “*Bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,*” must involve our ways of making and sustaining bone and flesh. Here is no *skiey* and *cloudy* work, and no room to rail at Mahomet’s terrestrial paradise.

of Minucius Felix, Justin Martyr and Tertullian—with the concessions of Gregory of Cæsarea, Origen, and Melito, in their places in this *DIEGESIS*—and with the total absence of any historical recognition of the existence of Christianity, as distinct from Paganism, within the first hundred years, or as distinct from a sectarian excrescence grown upon Paganism, within the first thousand years; and let him be faithful to his own convictions.

CHAPTER XXXV.

RESEMBLANCE OF PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN FORMS OF WORSHIP.

It would be alien from all ends of a *Diegesis*, or general narration of the character and evidences of the Christian religion, to have any ear or regard to the vituperations and wranglings of the various sects of Christians, who are each, if attended to, for unchristianizing all but themselves, and thus tearing the cause of their common Christianity to pieces, or surrendering it undefended to the scorn and triumph of its enemies. If Christianity be not, or was not, what the majority of those who professed and called themselves Christians, through a thousand years of its existence, held it to be, there is a sheer end of all possibility of ascertaining what it was or is, since, at that rate, it amounts to no more than the ideal chimera of any cracked brain you shall meet with; and all that can be said of it is—

“As the fool thinketh,
So the bell tinketh.”

The intolerant and persecuting spirit of the established Protestant church, and the severity of the penalties inflicted by law on all conscientious and honest avowals of the convictions which superior learning and deeper research might lead to, has enforced on the wisest and best of men a necessity of conveying their general scepticism under covert of attacking the peculiar doctrines and practices of the church of Rome. Because this mode of attack would be endured, this only was to be tolerated. The predominant sect, so their own tenure on the profits of *gospelling* remained unendangered, would look on with indifference, or even join in the game of running down and tearing to pieces their common parent. To this conten-

tious spirit of Christians among themselves, and their union only in the wicked policy of persecuting infidels, we owe discoveries which in no other way could have attracted equal attention. We are thus enabled to carry some or other of recognised Christian authorities all the way with us, taking up one where we set down another, till we arrive at the complete breaking up of all pretence to evidence of any sort, and bring orthodoxy itself to subscribe the demonstrations of reason. Thus M. Daille, in his attempt to show that the religious worship of his fellow Christians of the Roman Catholic communion could be distinctly traced to the institutions of Numa Pompilius, must lead every mind, capable of tracing our Protestant forms of piety to Roman Catholic institutions, to connect the first and last link of the sorites: *ergo*, Protestant ceremonies must have had the same origination.

Dr. Conyers Middleton, the most distinguished ornament of the church of England, could not, compatibly with his personal convenience, venture to go the whole length of the way which he points out to the travel of freer spirits, though, by demonstrating the utter falsehood and physical impossibility of all and every other pretended miracle that ever was in the world, not excepting one (except such as he might have been put in the pillory if he had not excepted), he leaves the conclusion to be drawn—as it may be by every mind capable of drawing a conclusion, and as he could securely calculate that it would be—with a stronger effect of conviction than if he had himself prescribed it.

Without regarding any of the *distinctions without difference* upon which the jarring sects of Christians wrangle among themselves, we pass now from the comparison of the doctrines of what has been called divine Revelation, with the previously existing tenets and dogmas of Paganism, to an examination of the no less striking resemblance of Pagan and Christian *forms of worship*.

Priests, altars, temples, solemn festivals, melancholy grimaces, ridiculous attitudes, trinkets, baubles, bells, candles, cushions, holy water, holy wine, holy biscuits, holy oil, holy smoke, holy vestments, and holy books, state candlesticks, dim-painted windows, * chalices, sal-

* In the most splendid chapel of the Methodists (Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn), the altar stands in a *druidical* alcove, upon which the light descends through yellow glass, to give to the countenance of their priests such a death-like tinge, as might make them seem to be standing under the immediate illapses of inspiration, "Creatures not of this earth, and yet being on it."

vers, pictures, tablets, achievements, music, &c. are found in various modifications and arrangements, not only in the sanctuaries of the Roman Catholic communion, but some or other, or all of them, even in methodistical conventicles, or in Unitarian pagodas—supposed to be at the farthest remove from any intended adoption of the Pagan and Papal ceremonies.

We have seen the pontifical mitre, the augural staff, the keys of Janus, and the Capitoline chickens, emblazoned on the armorial bearings, not of *Popish*, but of our *Protestant* bishops. The religious faction that seemed very reasonably to object to the “pomps and vanities of this sinful world, while in the possession of those who had corrupted the pure faith of Christianity, very meekly and consistently take upon themselves the burthen of three times the revenues of that corrupt church.*. Those who were shocked at so flagrant a violation of the precepts of their divine master, as that of the bishop of Rome, who styled himself *servant of the servants of God*, were content to be known only as—Right Reverend and Most Reverend Fathers in God, His Grace the Lord Archbishop, Bishop, Prelate, Metropolitan, and Primate, next in precedence to the blood royal, &c. &c. We have only to hope that *Lactantius* might have carried the matter too far where he says, that “among those who seek power and gain from their religion, there will never be wanting an inclination to forge and to lie for it.”†

“That Popery has borrowed its principal ceremonies and doctrines from the rituals of Paganism,” is a fact which the most learned and orthodox of the established church have most strenuously maintained and most convincingly demonstrated.

That Protestantism has borrowed its principal ceremonies and doctrines from the rituals of Popery, is a fact which the most learned and orthodox of the Catholic church as strenuously maintain, and as convincingly demonstrate. The conclusion, that Christianity is altogether Paganish, is as inevitable, as that if it be to be found neither among Catholics nor Protestants, there can be no such thing upon earth.

THE WHITE SURPLICE,

As worn by all our Protestant clergy, was the dress of the Pagan priesthood in a part of their public officiations,

* See the Table of Ecclesiastical Revenues.

† Lactant. *De fals. Relig.* l. 4.

and is so described by the satirist Juvenal,* and the poet Ovid.† It was the peculiar habiliment of the priests of Isis; and Isis herself being believed to have been the inventress of linen, of which these surplices are made, her effeminate priests were distinguished from more manly imposters by the still-applicable epithet of surplice or linen-wearers. Silius, however, speaking of the rites used in the Gaditan Temple of Hercules, instructs us that the priests of Hercules were also distinguished by wearing the white surplice. "They went barefoot, practised chastity, had no statues, wore white linen surplices, and paid tithe to Hercules;" that is, they were liberal in subscriptions to keep up the system that kept them up.

HOLY WATER.

WATER, wherein the person is baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.—Church of England Catechism.

THE BAPTISMAL FONT,

In our Protestant churches, and we can hardly say more especially the little cisterns at the entrance of our Catholic chapels, are not imitations, but an unbroken and never interrupted continuation of the same *aquaminaria* or *amula*, which the learned Montfaucon, in his *Antiquities*, shows to have been vases of holy water, which were placed by the heathens at the entrance of their temples to sprinkle themselves with upon entering those sacred edifices. "And with pure dews sprinkled, enter the temples,"‡ Euripides stands only in paraphrase in our Heb. x. 22, "Let us draw near with a true heart, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." The same vessel was called by the Greeks the *sprinkler*.§ Two of these, the one of gold, the other of silver, were given by Cræsus to the temple of Apollo at Delphi. Justin Martyr, the second in succession of the Christian Fathers, next to those who are called apostolic, says, that "this ablution, or wash, was invented by demons, in imitation of the true baptism, that their votaries

* Qui grege liniger circumdatus et grege calvo.—*Juv.* 6. 3.

† Nunc Dea linigerâ colitur celeberrima turbâ.—*Ovid. Met.* l. 746.

‡ ————— Καθαρίσας δὲ ὀφθαλμοῖς

Ἀφύδραναινοι στειχέτε τὰς.

§ Περιρραντήριον.

might also have their pretended purifications by water.* There certainly must have been something supernaturally ingenious in the inventions of these diabolical imitators, who always contrived to be the authors of the very first specimens of what they imitated, and to get their imitations into full vogue before the originals from which they copied were in existence. The "sanctification of water to the mystical washing away of sin," and in signification of "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness," had not only been used, but most abundantly abused, before its *original* institution as a Christian sacrament; as we find Ovid in verse,† and the best and wisest of the whole human race, Cicero, in his philosophical writings, severely rebuking the egregious absurdity of expecting moral improvement from any such foolish and contemptible superstitions.

The form of the *aspergillum*, or sprinkling-brush, as used by the clergy of the Catholic communion in sprinkling our Christian congregations, is yet to be seen in *bas-reliefs* and ancient coins, wherever the insignia or emblems of the Pagan priesthood are described. It may be seen at this day on a silver coin of Julius Cæsar, as well as on the coins of many other emperors. The severe ridicule and sarcasm heaped by our Protestant clergy on their Catholic brethren, for extending the benefit of these mysterious sprinklings to their horses, asses, and other cattle, would come with a better grace, if they themselves would explain what there is of a more rational and dignified significance in sprinkling new-born infants, who, in the eye of reason and common sense, might seem as little capable of receiving any benefit from the ceremony as the brute creation.

The ancient Pagans had especial gods and goddesses who presided over the birth of infants. The goddess *Nundina* took her name from the ninth day, on which all male children were sprinkled with holy water, as females were on the eighth, at the same time receiving their Pagan name; of which addition to the ceremonial of Christian baptism, we find no mention in the Christian Scriptures. When all the forms of the Pagan nundination were duly complied

* Καὶ τὸ λούτρον δὴ τότε ἀκούσαντες οἱ δαίμονες διὰ τὸ προφητὰ κηρυχμένον, πηγήσαν καὶ φαντίζουσιν αὐτοὺς τὰς εἰς τὰ ἱερά αὐτῶν ἐπιβαίνοντας.—*Just. Mart. Apol.* 1, 91, p. edit. Thirlb.

† Ah minium faciles qui tristia cri nina cædis

Flumineâ tolli posse putetis aquâ.—*Ovid. Fast.* 2. 45.

At animi labes nec dinternitate evanescere nec ullis amnis elui potest.—*Cicero.*

with, the priest gave a certificate to the parents of the regenerated infant ; it was thenceforth duly recognized as a legitimate member of the family and of society, and the day was spent in feasting and hilarity.

Fac-simile of a Pagan Certificate of Nundination.

I certify you, that in this case all is well done, and according unto due order, concerning the nundination of this child, who, being born in original sin, and in the wrath of God, is now, by the laver of regeneration in baptism, received into the number of the children of God, and heirs of the right of life.

Arcan. Probabilium.

Copy of the form of a Christian Certificate of Baptism.

I certify you, that in this case all is well done, and according unto due order, concerning the baptizing of this child, who, being born in original sin, and in the wrath of God, is now, by the laver of regeneration in baptism, received into the number of the children of God, and heirs of everlasting life.—*Church of England Baptismal Service.*

The old stories and impostures of the ancient Paganism, and the new versions of them, as adopted and sanctified by the faith of Christian believers, may be compared by juxta-position, thus—

PAGAN.

Cicero, concerning the origin of divination, relates—

That a man being at plough in a certain field of *Etruria*, and happening to strike his plough somewhat deeper than ordinary, there started up before him, out of the furrow, a *Deity*, whom they called *Tages*. The ploughman, terrified by so strange an apparition, made such an outcry, that he alarmed all his neighbours, and in a short time drew the whole country around him; to whom *The God*, in the hearing of them all, explained the whole art and mystery of divination : which all their writers and records affirmed to be the genuine origin of that

CHRISTIAN.

The whole collegiate church of regular canons, concerning the origin of St. Mary of Impruneta, relate—*

When the inhabitants of *Impruneta* had resolved to build a church to the Virgin, and were digging the foundations of it with great zeal, on a spot marked out to them by heaven, one of the labourers happened to strike his pickaxe against something under ground, from which there issued presently a complaining voice or groan.—The workmen being greatly amazed, put a stop to their work for a while; but having recovered their spirits, after some pause they ventured to

* *Impruneta*, a small town six miles from Florence.

discipline for which the old *Tuscans* were afterwards so famous.—*Cic. de Divin.* 2. 23. Cicero, however, subjoins, that to attempt to confute such stories would be as silly as to believe them.

open the place from which the voice came, and found *the miraculous image*. This is delivered by their writers, not grounded, as they say, on vulgar fame, but on public records and histories, confirmed by a perpetual series of miracles—*Middleton's Pref. Disc. to Letter from Rome*.

Our modern Iconoclasts* will be ready to cry out, that the asserters of these popish stories were no Christians: not seeing the dilemma they rush on, in subjecting themselves to the utterly unanswerable challenge. *Who then were Christians?* Let them strike from their list, if they please, all the writers, whose faith and credibility has been pawned and forfeited on stories,—than which the best are than this—no better; let them join the laugh against their Eusebius, for taking owls for angels; their St. Augustin, for preaching the gospel to a whole nation of men and women that had no heads; their Origen, for being a priest of the goddess Cybele and of Jesus Christ at the same time; their Tertullian, for believing the resurrection of Christ, because it was impossible; their Gregory for writing letters to the Devil, yes! and their great Protestant reformer Martin Luther, for seriously believing, that the Devil ran away with children out of their cradles and put his own *imps* in their places. And then produce all the testimonies they shall have left, of the existence of a religion that was not essentially and absolutely pagan, at any time before the period of their pretended reformation.

The only difference was, that Jupiter was turned into Jehovah, Apollo into Jesus Christ, Venus's pigeon into the Holy Ghost, Diana into the Virgin Mary, a new nomenclature was given to the old *materia theologica*: the demigods were turned into saints; the exploits of the one were represented as the miracles of the other; the pagan temples became Christian churches; and so ridiculously accommodating were the converters of the world to the prejudices of their pagan ancestors and neighbours, that we find, that for the express and avowed purposes of *accommodating* matters that the change might be the less offensive, and the old superstition as little shocked as possible, they generally observed some resemblance of quality and character in the *saint* whom they substituted

* Image breakers.

to the *old deity*. “If in converting the profane worship of the Gentiles to the pure and sacred worship of the church, the faithful were wont to follow some rule and proportion, they have certainly hit upon it here, (*at Rome*) in dedicating to the Virgin Mary, the temple formerly sacred to the *Bona Dea*, or Good Goddess,”* In a place formerly sacred to Apollo, there now stands the Church of Saint Apollinaris, built there, as they tell us, in order that the profane name of that Deity might be converted into the glorious name of this martyr.

Where there anciently stood the temple of *Mars*, they have erected a Church to Saint *Martina*, with this inscription,

Mars hence expelled; Martina martyr'd maid
Claims now the worship which to him was paid.†

It is certain that in the earlier ages of Christianity, the Christians often made free with the *sepulchral stones of heathen monuments*, which being ready cut to their hands, they converted to their own use, and turning downwards the side on which the old epitaph was engraved, used either to inscribe a new one on the other side, or leave it perhaps without any inscription at all. This has frequently been the occasion of ascribing martyrdom and saintship to persons and names of mere Pagans.

THE PANTHEON.

The noblest HEATHEN TEMPLE now remaining in the world, is the Pantheon or Rotunda, which, as the inscription over the portico informs us, having been *impiously* dedicated of old by Agrippa to Jove and all the Gods, was *piously* reconsecrated by Pope Boniface the Fourth, to the Mother of God and all the Saints.‡

* Si nel rivoltare il profano culto de gentili nel sacro e vero, osservarono i fedeli qualche proportion, qui la ritrovarono assai conveniente nel dedicare a Maria virgine un tempio, ch'era della Bona Dea.—*Rom. Med. Gior.* 2. *Rion di Rissa*, 10.

† The inscription of course is in Latin, and this it is—

Martyrii gestans virgo Martina coronam
Ejecto hinc Martis numina Templa tenet.

‡ The inscription is—

PANTHEON, &c.

AB AGRIPPA AUGUSTI GENERO
IMPIE JOVI, CÆTERISQUE MENDACIBUS DIIS
A BONIFACIO IIII. PONTIFICE
DEIPARE ET S. S. CHRISTI MARTYRIBUS PIE
DICATUM,
&c.

Inscriptions in Pagan Temples. Inscriptions in Christian Churches.**

1. To Mercury and Minerva, Tutelary Gods.	1. To St. Mary and St. Francis, My Tutelaries.
2. To the Gods who preside over this Temple.	2. To the Divine Eustorgius, who presides over this Temple.
3. To the Divinity of Mercury, the availing, the powerful, the unconquered.	3. To the Divinity of St. George, the availing, the powerful, the unconquered.
4. Sacred To the Gods and Goddesses with Jove the Best and the Greatest.	4. Sacred To the presiding helpers, St. George and St. Stephen, with God the Best and Greatest.
5. Apollo's Head, surrounded with rays of glory.	5. Venus's Pigeon, surrounded with rays of glory.
6. The mystical letters I H S, surrounded with rays of glory.	6. The mystical letters I H S, surrounded with rays of glory.

Aringhus, in his account of subterraneous Rome, acknowledges this conformity between the Pagan and Christian forms of worship, and defends the admission of the ceremonies of heathenism into the service of the church, by the authority of the wisest prelates and governors, who found it necessary, *he says*, in the conversion of the Gentiles, to dissemble and wink† at many things, and yield to the times; and not to use force against customs which the people were so obstinately fond of, nor to think of extirpating at once every thing that had the appearance of profane, but to supersede in some measure the operation of the sacred laws, till these converts

- * 1. Mercurio et Minervæ, Diis Tutelarib.
- 2. Dii qui hac templo præsent.
- 3. Numini Mercurii, pollenti, potenti, invicto.
- 4. Diis Deabus que cum Jove.

Gruter's Inscriptions.

† "And the times of this ignorance God winked at.."—Acts xvii, 30.

- * 1. Mariæ et Franciscæ, Tutelares mei.
- 2. Divo Eustorgio, qui hac templo præsidet.
- 3. Numini Divi Georgii, pollenti, potenti, invicto.
- 4. Divis præstitibus juvantibus, Georgio Stephanoque, cum Deo Opt. Max.

Baldonius Epigraphs.

convinced by degrees, and informed of the whole truth, by the suggestions of the Holy Spirit, should be content to submit in earnest to the yoke of Christ.*

The reader will do himself the justice of collating this admission with the same accommodating policy of St. Gregory, adduced in our Chapter of Admissions, p. 48.

SAINTS AND MARTYRS THAT NEVER EXISTED.

The last of ten thousand features of resemblance between Paganism and Christianity, which might be adduced to establish their absolute identity, which we shall care to notice, is the striking coincidence that the Christian personages, like the Pagan deities, were frequently created by errors of language, mistakes of noun substantives for proper names, ignorance of the sense of abbreviated words, substitution of one letter for another, &c. &c. so that words which had only stood for a picture, a cloak, a high-road, a ship, a tree, &c. in their original use, were passed over in another language as names of gods, heroes, saints, and martyrs, when no such persons had ever existed. Thus have we a Christian church erected to Saint *Amphibolus*, another to Saint *VIAR*—Christian prayers addressed to the holy martyr Saint Veronica; and Chrestus adored as a god, by the ignorance that was not aware that

Amphibolus was Greek for a cloak;

Viar. abbreviated Latin for a perfectus *Viarum*, or overseer of the highways;

Vera Icon, half Latin and half Greek for true image; and Chrestus† the Greek in Roman letters for any good and useful man or thing.

* Ac maximi subinde pontifices quam plurima prima quidem facie dissimulanda duxere, optimum scilicet rati temporis deferendum esse; suadebant quippe sibi, hand ullam adversus gentilitios ritus vim, utpote qui mordicus a fidelibus retinebantur, adhibendam esse; neque ullatenus enitendum, ut quicquid profanos saperet mores, omnino tolleretur, quinimo quam maxima utendum lenitate, sacrarumque legum ex parte intermittendum imperium arbitrabantur.—Tom. 1, lib. 1, c. 21.

† This mistake originates in what is called the "Iotacism, which consists in pronouncing the ι like η. The modern Greeks give them both the sound of the Italian *I* or English *E*. This prevailed much in Egypt, and hence is frequently seen to take place in the Alexandrine MSS. Hence also Χριστος and Χητος have been confounded; and Suetonius has written, "Judæos impulsore CHRÆSTO assiduè tumultuantes Româ expulit."—*Elsley's Annotations on the Gospels*, vol. 1, p. xix.

But surely this will read quite as well if taken exactly the other way. It was as easy for the Christian-evidence manufacturers to change E into I, as for Suetonius to have changed I into E.

Notwithstanding the idiot's dream of an imaginary pre-Protestant state of Christianity, or of Christianity in its primitive purity, ere what are called the *corruptions* of the Romish church had mingled with and defiled the stream, our Protestant historians are not able to make good their evidence of the existence of Christianity, in any time or place, in separation from the most exceptionable of those corruptions. Never was there the day or the hour in which Christianity *was*, and its corruptions were *not*. The thing of supposable rational evidence, historical fact, sublime doctrines, moral precepts, and practical utility, which we hear of in the coxcomb-divinity of an Unitarian chapel, is a perfect *ens rationis*, the beauideal of conceit, that never had its type in history. Though the most accurate calculations satisfactorily prove that not more than a twentieth part of the Roman empire had embraced the Christian name before the conversion of Constantine, yet on the occasion of that prince's death, his historian, Eusebius,* tells us of *masses* which were celebrated, and prayers which were said for his soul in the Apostle's church, as a thing of course, and in a way in which it was impossible that such performance of mass and prayers for the dead could have been spoken of, had there been any contrary doctrine or practice known to Christ's church, of higher antiquity or of better sanction than they.



CHAPTER XXXVI.

SPECIMENS OF PAGAN PIETY.

Προφυγία.

“THE first of the Orphic† Hymns is addressed to the goddess *Προφυγία*, or the *Door-keeper*, and as it is perhaps the most ancient monument extant of the adoration paid to the deity who was supposed to preside over *child-births*, and whom the Romans afterwards called *Juno Lucina*, or *Diana Lucina*,” I present the reader with a literal translation of it, which I find ready made to my hand, in Parkhurst's Hebrew Lexicon :—

* Euseb. Hist. of Constantine, book 4, ch. 71.

† Orpheus, or rather Onomacritus, lived 560 B. C.

“ *To PROTHYRÆA, the Incense, STORAX.*

“Hear me, O venerable goddess, demon with many names,* aid in travail, sweet hope of child-bed women, SAVIOUR of females, kind friend to infants, speedy deliverer, propitious to youthful nymphs, *Prothyraea*! Key-bearer, gracious nourisher, gentle to all, who dwellest in the houses of all, delightest in banquets! Zone-looser, secret, but in thy works to all apparent! Thou sympathisest with throes, but rejoicest in easy labours; *Ilithyria*, in dire extremities, putting an end to pangs; thee alone parturient women invoke, rest of their souls, for in thy power are those throes that end their anguish, *Artemis, Illythyria, reverend Prothyraea*. Hear, immortal dame, and grant us offspring by thy aid, and save us, as thou hast always been the SAVIOUR of all!”—*Lexicon*, under the word *πλάω*—*to bring forth or be delivered.*†

A free poetical version of an hymn to Diana, expressive of her attributes, as generally believed and worshipped about the time of St. Paul, to the measure of the Sicilian Mariner's Hymn :—

“ *Great is Diana of the Ephesians.*”—Acts xix. 34.

“ Great Diana! huntress queen!
Goddess bright, august, serene!
In thy countenance divine
Heaven's eternal glories shine.

Thou art holy! thou alone,
Next to Juno, fill'st the throne!
Thou for us on earth wast seen—
Thou, of earth and heav'n the queen!

They to thee who worship pay,
From thy precepts never stray;
Chaste they are, and just and pure,
And from fatal sins secure;

* And what was to hinder the blessed Virgin Mary from being one of the names of this demon? Godfrey Higgins, Esq. in his most instructive and interesting History of the Celtic Druids, published A. D. 1827, states that he counted upwards of forty different names under the image of the Virgin at Loretto.—p. 109.

† The reader will observe, that as the distinguishing attributes of the Pagan divinities were represented in their statues, it was absolutely impossible that this Divine Virgin, *kind friend to infants*, could be symbolized otherwise than as with a child in her arms. But such a representation could not possibly symbolize or distinguish the mother of Jesus from any other mother!

Peace of mind 'tis their's to know,
 To thy blessed sway who bow ;
 Chastest body, purest mind—
 Will, to will of God resign'd ;
 Conquest over griefs and cares ;
 Peace—for ever peace, is their's.

O bright goddess ! once again
 Fix on earth thy heav'nly reign ;
 Be thy sacred name ador'd,
 Altars rais'd, and rites restor'd !

But if long contempt of thee
 Move thy sacred deity
 This so fond request to slight,
 Beam on me, on me, thy light.

Thy adoring vot'ry, I
 In thy faith will live and die ;
 And when Jove's supreme command
 Calls me to the Stygian strand,

I no fear of death shall know,
 But with thee contented go :
 Thou my goddess, thou my guide,
 Bear me through the fatal tide ;

Land me on th' Elysian shore,
 Where nor sin, nor grief is more—
 Life's eternal blest abode,
 Where is virtue, where is God."

First published in the Author's Clerical Review, in Ireland.

THE PRAYER OF SIMPLICIUS.

There is a most beautiful prayer of the Pagan *Simplicius*, generally given at the end of Epictetus's *Enchiridion*, and almost the model of that used in our Communion Service, "*O Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known,*" &c. The *ideas* are precisely the same ; the words and the machinery alone are a little varied. I find a ready-made poetical version of this, in Johnson's *Rambler*.

" O thou, whose pow'r o'er moving worlds presides,
 Whose voice created, and whose wisdom guides !
 On darkling man in pure effulgence shine,
 And cheer the clouded mind with light divine.
 'Tis thine alone, to calm the pious breast
 With silent confidence and holy rest.
 From thee, great Jove ! we spring, to thee we tend,
 Path, Motive, Guide, Original, and End !"

THE CREED OF PYTHAGORAS.

“There is one God, and there is none other but he.”—Mark xii. 32.

“God is neither the object of sense, nor subject to passion, but invisible, only intelligible, and supremely intelligent. In his body he is like the light, and in his soul he resembles truth. He is the universal spirit that pervades and diffuseth itself over all nature. All beings receive their life from him. *There is but One only God!!* who is not, as some are apt to imagine, seated above the world beyond the orb of the universe;* but being himself all in all, he sees all the beings that fill his immensity, the only principle, the light of heaven, the Father of all. He produces every thing, he orders and disposes every thing; he is the reason, the life, and the motion of all beings.”—*Dr. Collyer's Lectures, quoted by G. Higgins, Esq. Celtic Druids, 4to. p. 126.*

Mr. Higgins, adducing this bit of Paganism, exclaims, “How beautiful!” But surely, he would not think of putting these *unsanctified* notions of the deity on a footing with the sublime description of the evangelical poet Dr. Watts, who, knowing so much more about God than Pythagoras did, tells us,

His nostrils breathe out fiery streams,
He's a consuming fire;
His jealous eyes his wrath inflame,
And raise his vengeance high'r! !”

Watt's Hymns, book 1, hymn 42.

The consolations and advantages which the Christian derives from the blessed light of the Gospel, may be best appreciated by thus comparing them with the darkness of Paganism:

“So lies the snow upon a raven's back!”

THE GOLDEN VERSES OF PYTHAGORAS.

Of these, I supply a free poetical version, by the father of the late Mr. John Adams, of Edmonton, to whom I

* This sentiment of Pythagoras, so many years before the Christian era, is evidently the correction of some grosser form of demonolatry, which had prevailed in the heathen world before the time of Pythagoras, and which had been expressed in such words as “*Our Father, which art in heaven, &c.*”

owe my *prima elementa* of literature. The Greek text is below.*

“Let not soft slumber close thine eyes,
Before thou recollectest thrice
Thy train of actions through the day :
‘Where have my feet found out their way ?
What have I learn’d, where’er I’ve been,
From all I’ve heard, from all I’ve seen ?
What know I more that’s worth the knowing ?
What have I done that’s worth the doing ?
What have I sought that I should shun ?
What duty have I left undone ?
Or into what new follies run ?
These self-inquiries are the road
That leads to virtue and to God.”

THE MORALS OF CONFUCIUS.

The result of the learned researches of the pious Sir William Jones was, his established conviction “that a connection existed between the old idolatrous nations of Egypt, India, Greece, and Italy, long before the birth of Moses.”—*Asiatic Researches*, vol. 1, p. 271.

“The philosophic *Baillie* has remarked, that every thing in China, India, and Persia, tends to prove that these countries have been the depositaries of science, not its inventors.”†

Dr. Mosheim has proved the establishment of the Therapeutan monks at Alexandria *before* the time when Christ is said to have been on earth ; and that these Therapeutan monks were professors of the *Eclectic* Philosophy, avowedly collecting and bringing together the best tenets of moral philosophy which could be gathered from all the various systems of the world. They were, for this purpose, as well as to extend their power and influence, mighty travellers, and could not have failed of visiting China. Among the maxims which *Kon-futz-see*, or Confucius, the

* Μηδ' υπνον μαλακοισιν επ ουμασι προσδεξασθαι
Πριν των ημερινων εργαων τρις εκαστον επελθειν :
Πη παρεβην ; τι δ'ερεξα ; τι μοι διον ουκ ετελεισθη ;
Αρξαμενος δ'απο πρωτου επιξειθι. Και μετ'επειτα
Δειλα μιν εκπρηξας, επιπλησσο, χρηστα δε τερπου.

† Mr. Higgins on the Celtic Druids, p. 52. On p. 45 of which, see “a lamentable example in the case of Sir William Jones himself, of the power of religious bigotry to corrupt the mind of even the best of men.” The moral sensibilities of this great man could better abide the consciousness of the most wilful and scandalous misrepresentation, than to be just to the character of an adversary. Such are the triumphs of the Gospel !

great Chinese philosopher, who had flourished about 500 years before the birth of Christ, had left to that people, was the GOLDEN RULE of doing unto others as "you would they should do unto you."

This, the Therapeuts, adopted into their Moral Gnomologue, or put into the mouth of the Demon of the Diegesis, from whence it passed into the copies or epitomes of the Diegesis, which have been falsely taken for the original compositions of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Depending, as we necessarily must, on a translation, (for who that had to learn any thing else, could learn the language of the Chinese?) I follow the edition by Josephus Tela, reprinted from the edition of 1691; and collating this by the text of the New Testament, the reader will see that not only the idea is precisely the same, but the rhythmus, manner, and manner of connection, are precisely the same, beyond the solution of any hypothesis, but that the latter is a *plagiarism*.

CONFUCIUS,
Maxim 24th.

Do to another what you would he should do unto you; and do not unto another what you would not should be done unto you. Thou only needest this law alone; It is the foundation and principle of all the rest.

ST. MATTHEW,
Chapter vi. verse 12.

Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

The abridged form and more smoothly constructed sentence, according to canons of criticism already laid down,* demonstrates the later composition, consequently the *plagiarism*.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CHARGES BROUGHT AGAINST CHRISTIANITY BY ITS EARLY ADVERSARIES, AND THE CHRISTIAN MANNER OF ANSWERING THOSE CHARGES.

AFTER having fairly considered and compared the striking features of resemblance which subsist between the Pagan and Christian doctrines, and also between the Pagan and

* See Canon 8, p. 111, of this DIEGESIS.

Christian forms of worship, and given due weight to the admissions which Christian divines and historians have made touching that resemblance; our method requires that we should take some account of such of the charges which their early enemies brought against them, as their fairness has transmitted, or their inadvertency has suffered to escape and come down to posterity.

We can never lose from this calculation, the plumb dead weight which Christians themselves have thrown into the adverse scale, by those arts of suppressing facts, stifling testimony, preventing the coming-up of evidence, persecuting witnesses, and destroying or perverting the documents that were from time to time adduced against them, of which they stand convicted by the concurrent testimony of all parties, and their own reiterated avowals, full often themselves "glorying in their shame," and boasting of having promoted the cause of truth, by frauds and sophistications of which their heathen adversaries would have been ashamed.

Were we in full possession, as in reason and fairness we ought to have been, of the writings of Porphyry, Celsus, Hierocles, and other distinguished and conscientious opponents of the Christian faith; as they wrote themselves, and not as their adversaries were pleased to write for them, suffering them only to seem to make such objections as were ridiculous or weak in themselves, or such as Christian writers found themselves most easily able to answer; the probability is, that the whole apparatus of Christian evidence would be beaten off the field; and we should be able to give the fullest and most satisfactory explanation of those apparent defects in the manner by which those who held Christianity to be an imposture, *ought to have assailed it*, which cannot be ascribed to their deficiency of shrewdness, or insincerity of hostility.

We see even in our own days, and the author of this work experiences in his own person, in the endurance of an unjust and cruel imprisonment,* and still to be continued bondage of five years after the term of that imprisonment shall have expired, what sort of justice Christians would be likely to show to the arguments of their opponents. Were they orators whose powers of declamation their Christian adversaries must have despaired to cope with? Why, their persons could be *Oakhamized*. Were they

* This work was composed in Oakham Gaol.

writers whose diligence of research, fidelity of statement, and strength of argument, could not be equalled? Why, their writings could be suppressed, or kept back as much as possible from public knowledge; and then, to be sure, their Christian adversaries, in their guaranteed security that all that should be *heard*, and all that should be *read*, should be their preachings and writings only, would not only represent their opponents as the most contemptible orators and weakest reasoners in the world, but could father them with such miserable specimens of eloquence, and such jejune and feeble objections, as Origen would exhibit as the composition of Celsus, and as Eusebius has invented for Porphyry. It was never to be endured by Christians, that an orator who opposed their faith should be believed to have been eloquent, or that a writer who confuted their opinions, should be thought to be reasonable.

CHARGE 1.

That THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES WERE PLAGIARISMS FROM PREVIOUSLY EXISTING PAGAN SCRIPTURES, is the specific and particular charge which the early opponents of Christianity *ought* to have brought against it, if that charge were tenable. The apparent *not bringing forward of such a charge* leaves in the hands of the advocates of Christianity, the presumption that such a charge was not tenable; and *ergo*, that THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES WERE THE ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS OF THE PERSONS TO WHOM CHRISTIANS THEMSELVES ASCRIBED THEM.

THE ANSWER.

To this, which is the pith of the whole argument, it is answered, 1st. That though the charge had been tenable, it could not, from its own nature, have been brought forward, before the Christians had first brought forward a pretence that they were in possession of original Scriptures, and had permitted it to be generally known what those Scriptures were. But that pretence was not made till after the Christian religion had been preached and established, and a large number of converts already made *

* "Lardner shows *advantages* arising from a *late* publication of the Gospels. It was first requisite, he states, that the religion should be preached and *established*, and a large number of converts made. The apostles, says Eusebius, spread the Gospel over the world; nor were they (at the first) much concerned to *write*, be-

without reference to, or any use made, or even the pretended existence of any Christian writings at all, nor till after the period when St. Paul says the Gospel had already been "preached to every creature under heaven." *

After the substance of the matter which had thus attained extensive prevalence and general belief before it was committed to writings of any sort, appeared in written documents, it is not only not likely that the people who had been already "rooted and built up in the faith" without any service or help of such writings, should have much valued or sought for means of grace that they had so long done without; but it is absolutely certain that they continued to do without them; nor was it at any time within the three first centuries, that the general community of Christians were permitted to know what the contents of their Scriptures were.

And 2ndly. When the time had arrived that the charge of *plagiarism* against the Christian Scriptures, if tenable, should have been brought forward, the priests, in whose hands alone the Scriptures were to be found, had acquired such tremendous power and influence as to procure, by the decrees of Constantine and Theodosius, that all writings of Porphyry and others, that had been composed against the Christian faith, should be committed to the flames; and happy was the writer who got out of the way time enough to escape the fate of his writings.

CHARGE 2.

"Among the various calumnies with which the worshippers of Christ were formerly assailed," says the learned Sebastian Kortholt,† "the first place is justly given to

ing engaged in a most excellent ministry, exceeding all human power."—*Elsley's Annot.* vol. 1, p. 11. What says reason?

* "If ye continue grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature under heaven, whereof I, Paul, am made a deacon."—Col. i. 23. Οὐ γενομένην ἐγὼ Παῦλος διακονός.

When will men learn to see with their own eyes, and reason with their own understandings?—1. This Paul owns himself a deacon, the lowest ecclesiastical grade of the Tharapeutan church. 2. This epistle was written two years before any one of our gospels. 3. The gospel of which it speaks had been extensively preached and fully established before the reign of Augustus!

† Kortholti Paganus Obtrectator, Kiloni, A. D. 1698, p. 1. In extracts from this work, I claim the liberty of giving my own translation, without affixing more than the note of chapter and page from the original, except where there seems a strength in the original which the rendering might be thought to have enhanced.

the charge that they had brought in new and unheard-of rites, and that they sought to contaminate the holy purity of the religious ceremonies of antiquity, by the superstition of their novelty."

THE ANSWER.

From this charge the Christians only attempted to vindicate themselves, by proving the most exact sameness and conformity of their doctrines and tenets to the purest and most respectable forms of the ancient idolatry: a mode of argument as serviceable to their cause, then, as in all inference of reason it is fatal now. Who would expect, among the very first and ablest advocates of a religion that had been revealed in the person of a divine prophet who had appeared in a province of the Roman empire, under the reign of the emperor Tiberius, such admissions as those of their Justin Martyr, that "what we say of our Jesus Christ is nothing more than what you say of those whom you style the sons of Jove? As to his being born of a virgin, you have your Perseus to balance that; as to his being crucified, there's Bacchus, Hercules, Pollux and Castor, to account for *that*; and as to rising from the dead, and ascending into heaven, why, you know, this is only what you yourselves ascribe to the souls of your departed emperors."* What short of an absolute surrender of all pretence to an existence distinctive and separate from Paganism, is that never-to-be-forgotten, never-to-be-overlooked, and I am sure never-to-be-answered capitulation of their MELITO, bishop of Sardis, in which, in an apology delivered to the emperor Marcus Antoninus, in the year 170,† he complains of certain annoyances and vexations which Christians were at that time subjected to, and for which he claims redress from the justice and piety of that emperor: first, on the score that none of his ancestors had ever persecuted the professors of the Christian faith, Nero and Domitian *only*, who had been equally hostile to their subjects of all persuasions, having been disposed to bring the Christian doctrine into hatred; and even *their* decrees had been reversed, and their rash enterprises rebuked, by the *godly* ancestors of Antoninus himself." An absolute demonstration this, that all the stories of persecution suffered by Christians on the score of their religion are utterly

* See this passage in its place and relevancy, in the Chapter on *Justin Martyr*.

† See this also, under the head *Melito*, in this *DIGRESS*.

untrue. And, secondly, the good bishop claims the patronage of the emperor for the Christian religion, which he calls *our philosophy*, “on account of its high antiquity, as having been imported from countries lying beyond the limits of the Roman empire, in the reign of his ancestor Augustus, who had found its importation ominous of good fortune to his government.” An absolute demonstration this, that Christianity did *not* originate in Judea, which was a Roman province, but really was an exotic oriental fable, imported about that time from the barbarians, and mixed up with the infinitely mongrel modifications of Roman piety, till it outgrew the vigour of the stock on which it had been engrafted, and so came to give its own character entirely to the whole system.

The adoption of the fabulous CHRISHNA of the Hindus per conveyance of the Egyptian monks into the Roman empire, having taken place in or about the reign of Augustus, gave occasion to later historians to pretend that Christ was *born* in the reign of Augustus; and to all that confusion which arises from the adversaries of Christianity charging it with novelty, while its earliest advocates challenge for it the highest and most remote antiquity.*

CHARGE 3.

In the edict of Diocletian, preserved in the fragments of Hermogenes, the Christians are called Manichees. It sufficiently appears that the Gentiles in general confounded the Christians and Manichees, and that there really was no difference, or appeared to be none, between the followers of Christ and of Manes. Let who will or can, determine the curious question, whether Manes and his followers were heretical seceders from Christianity, or whether those who afterwards acquired the name of Christians, were heretics from the primitive sect of Manichees. The admitted fact of the existence of upwards of ninety different heresies, or manners and variations of the telling of the Gospel story, within the three first centuries, is proof demonstrative that there could have been no common authority to which Christians could appeal, and, consequently, no Scriptures of higher claims than any of the innumerable

* Kortholti Paganus Obtrectator, ch. 1. p. 5. Pertinet huic quod Gregorius Nazianzenus affirmat, Christianam doctrinam veterem simul et novam esse.—Ibidem, p. 10.

apocryphal versions, *wherefrom* to collect their opinions, or *whereby* to decide their controversies. It is admitted by Mosheim, that the more intelligent among the Christian people in the third century had been taught, that true Christianity as it was inculcated by Jesus, and not as it was afterwards corrupted by his disciples, differed in few points from the Pagan religion, properly explained and restored to its primitive purity;* so that these good people very conveniently found the way of swimming with the tide, and were converted to Christianity, while they continued as staunch Pagans as ever. But this, of course, could be viewed by a modern advocate of Christianity in no other light than as an invention of the enemy; however, it was neither a weak one in itself, nor unsuccessful in its issue. "Many were ensnared," says the Christian historian, "by the absurd attempts of these insidious philosophers. Some were induced by these perfidious stratagems to abandon the Christian religion, which they had embraced. Others, when they were taught to believe that Christianity and Paganism, properly understood, were virtually but one and the same religion, determined to remain in the religion of their ancestors, and in the worship of the gods and goddesses. A third sort were led, by these comparisons between Christ and the ancient philosophers, to form to themselves a motley system of religion, composed of the tenets of both parties, and paid divine honours indiscriminately to Christ and to Orpheus, to Apollonius, and the other philosophers and heroes, whose names had acquired celebrity in ancient times."

THE DOCTRINE OF MANES AND HIS HISTORY.

MANI, properly so called, though more commonly Manes or Manichæus, from whom the most important Christian sect that ever existed, takes its designation, was by birth a Persian, educated amongst the Magi, or wise men of the East, and himself originally one of that order.

The ecclesiastical historian Socrates gives us this account of him:—

"Not long before the reign of Constantine, there sprang up a kind of *heathenish Christianity*, which mingled itself

* Mosheim, vol. 1, cent. 3, chap. 2. Collate herewith the terms of compromise with Paganism offered by St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Gregory, and other holy popes.

with the true Christian religion ; for in those days the doctrine of Empedocles, a heathen philosopher, was clandestinely introduced into Christianity. One *Scythianus*, a Saracen, had married a captive woman, native of the upper Thebais, and upon her account he lived in Egypt. Having been instructed in the learning of the Egyptians, he introduced the doctrine of Empedocles and Pythagoras into Christianity ; asserting the existence of two natures, the one good, the other evil, as Empedocles did, and calling the evil nature *Neikos* (Discord), and the good nature *Philia* (Friendship). Buddas, formerly named Terebinthus, became a disciple of that Scythianus ; he travelled into Persia, where he told a great many strange stories of himself,—as, that he was born of a virgin, and brought up in the mountains. Afterwards he wrote four books : one of which was entitled *the Mysteries* ; another THE GOSPEL ; a third *Thesaurus*, or the Treasury ; the fourth a *Summary*. He pretended a power to work miracles ; but on one occasion, being on a high tower, the Devil threw him down, so that he broke his neck and died miserably.* The woman at whose house he had resided buried him, and succeeding to the possession of his property, bought a boy of seven years old, whose name was *Cubricus*. This youth she adopted ; and after having given him his freedom, and a good education, she bequeathed him all the estate she had derived from Terebinthus, and the books which he had written according to the instructions of Scythianus his master. With these possessions and advantages, upon the death of his patroness, Cubricus went into Persia, and changed his name into *Manes*, and there gave out the books which Terebinthus had thus composed, under the direction of his master Scythianus, as his own original works. These books bore a show and colouring of Christianity, but were in reality heathenish ; for the impious Manes directs the worship of many gods, teaches that the *Sun* ought to be adored. He introduces the doctrine of fatal necessity, and denies the free agency of man. He openly teaches the transmigration of souls,† as held by Py-

* The reader, who may find this entire passage in Dr. Lardner's *Credibility*, vol. 2, p. 141, will observe my variations from it. I take this liberty only upon the grounds of preference for my own translation of the original itself, which I have on my table, and with which I compare the text of Lardner through every sentence.

† The Pythagorean doctrines are still traceable in the Christian Scriptures : the Christ of St John's Gospel is evidently a Pythagorean philosopher. *Ye must be*

thagoras, Empedocles, and the Egyptians. He denies that Christ was ever really born, or had real human flesh, but asserts that he was a mere phantom. He rejects the law and the prophets, and calls himself the Paraclete or Comforter: All which things are far from the true and right faith of the church of God. In his epistles he was not ashamed to entitle himself an apostle. At length his abominations met with their merited punishment."

"The son of the king of Persia happening to have fallen into dangerous illness, his father, having both heard of Manichæus, and believing his miracles to be true, sent for him as an apostle, and believed that his son would by his means be restored. Upon his arrival he takes the king's son in hand, *after the fashion of a conjuror*.* But the king having seen that the boy died under his hands, had him imprisoned, intending to put him to death; but he made his escape, and came into Mesopotamia. The king of Persia, hearing that he was in those parts, sent after him, and, upon his second apprehension, had him flayed alive."—This king of Persia was Varanes the First.

Notwithstanding the calumnies heaped on Manes, Dr. Lardner has shown that he was, in the best and strictest acceptation of the term, a *sincere Christian*, and has adduced many passages from his writings equally honourable to his understanding and to his heart. Not only the learned Faustus,† Bishop of Melevi in Africa, whose tremendous charge against the authenticity of our canonical Gospels we have elsewhere given; but others, by far the most learned, intelligent, and virtuous men that ever professed and called themselves Christians, were Manichæans, and among these was the renowned St. Augustin himself, till he found that higher distinctions and better emoluments were to be gained by joining the stronger party. Whereupon he left the poor presbytery of the Manichæan church, to become the orthodox bishop of Hippo Regius: and from thenceforth, with the zeal that always characterizes a turncoat he set himself to heap all the calumnies and misrepresentations he possibly could upon that purer and more primitive Christianity which he had deserted; awk-

born again (John iii.), is the characteristic aphorism of the Pythagorean school. See the Chapter xxxiii. entitled PYTHAGORAS, in this *DIEGESIS*, p. 217.

* *Μετα τὴν ἐπιπλαστὴν σχήματος εὐχαιρίζεται τὸν, &c.* Dr. Lardner cuts me this knot with a SKIP in his rendering.

† Faustus flourished about A. D. 384 at the latest, and had been known to Augustin before that wily and mendacious saint apostatized from Manicheism to orthodoxy.

wardly enough confessing, that he himself should never have believed the Gospel, unless the authority of the church had induced him* (*paid him*) to do so. There are, I fear, more than nineteen out of any twenty bishops that could be named, who owe their orthodoxy at this day to the same sort of inducement.

DEMONSTRATION THAT NO SUCH PERSON AS JESUS CHRIST
EVER EXISTED.

There were two very different opinions concerning Christ very early among Christians. Some, as Augustin says,† believed Christ to be God, and denied him to be man; others believed he was a man, and denied him to be God. The former was the opinion of the Manichees, and of many others before them; of others so early, indeed, and so certainly, that Cotelierius, in a note on Ignatius's Epistle to the Trallians, assures us that it would be as absurd as to question that the sun shone at mid-day, ‡ to deny that the doctrine that taught that Christ's body was a *phantom* only, and that no such person as Jesus Christ had ever any corporeal existence, was held in the time of the apostles themselves.§ Ignatius, the apostolic Father, expressly censures this opinion, as having gained ground even before *his* time. "If, as some who are atheists—that is, unbelievers—say, that he only suffered in appearance,||—an expression which, as Cotelierius observes, plainly shows the early rise of this doctrine. And from the apostolic age downwards, in a never interrupted succession, but never so strongly and emphatically as in the most primitive times, was the existence of Christ as a man most strenuously denied. So that though nothing is so convenient to some persons as to assume airs of contempt, and to cry out that those who deny that

* Ego evangelio nequa quam crediderim nisi ecclesie auctoritas me commoveret. *August. ut citat Michaelis.*

† Ait enim Christus Deus est tantum, omnino hominis nihil habens. Hoc Manichei dicunt. Photiani, homo tantum. Manichei, Deus tantum.—*August. Serm. 17, c. 12.*

‡ As absurd as to question that the sun shone, &c. Solem negaret meridie lucere, qui Docetas, seu phantasiastas hæreticos temporibus apostolorum inficiaretur erupisse.—*Cotel. ad Ign. Ep. ad Trall. c. 10.*

§ Apostolis adhuc in seculo superstitibus, adhuc apud Judæam Christi sanguine recenti, phantasma Domini corpus asserebatur.—*Hieron. adv. Lucif. T. 4, p. 204.*

|| Εἰ δὲ ὡς περ τίνες ἄθεοι οὐτὲς, τοὺτ' ἐστὶν ἀπίστοι, λεγούσιν το δοκεῖν πεπονθῆναι αὐτὸν κ. τ. λ.—*Ign. ad Trall. c. 10, et passim.*

such a person as Jesus of Nazareth ever existed, are utterly unworthy of being answered, and would fly in the face of all historical evidence, the fact of the case is, that the being of no other individual mentioned in history ever laboured under such a deficiency of evidence as to its reality, or was ever upset by a thousandth part of the weight of *proof positive*, that it was a creation of imagination only.

To the question, then, On what grounds do you deny that such a person as Jesus Christ existed as a man? the proper answer is,

Because his existence as a man has, from the earliest day on which it can be shown to have been asserted, been as earnestly and strenuously denied; and that, not by enemies of the Christian name, or unbelievers of the Christian faith, but by the most intelligent, most learned, most sincere of the Christian name, who ever left the world proofs of their intelligence and learning in their writings, and of their sincerity in their sufferings;

And because the existence of no individual of the human race, that was real and positive, was ever, by a like conflict of jarring evidence, rendered equivocal and uncertain.

CHARGE 4.

It was distinctly charged against the early preachers of Christianity, that they had adopted and transferred to their own use the materials they found prepared to their hands, in the writings of the ancient poets and philosophers; and by giving a very slight turn to the matter, and a mere change of names, had vamped up a patchwork of mythology and ethics, a mixture of the Oriental Gnosticism and the Greek Philosophy, into a system which they were for foisting upon the world as a matter of a divine revelation that had been especially revealed to themselves. "All these figments of crack-brained opinion and silly solaces played off in the sweetness of song by deceitful poets, by you too credulous creatures, have been shamefully reformed and made over to your own God."* Such is the objection of Cœcilius, in the Octavius of Minucius Felix, written in dialogue, about the

* Omnia ista figmenta malesanæ opinionis, et inepta solatia, a poetis fallacibus, in dulcedine carminis lusa, a vobis nimium credulis in Deum vestrum, turpiter reformati sunt.—*Minucius Felix in Apol.*

year 211. A charge answered by admission, rather than denial, and corroborated by the never-to-be-forgotten fact, that the Egyptian Therapeuts in their university of Alexandria, where first Christianity gained an establishment, were *professedly* followers and maintainers of the *Eclectic* philosophy, which consisted in nothing else but this very overt and avowed practice of bringing together whatever they held to be useful and good in all other systems; and thus, as they pretended, concentrating all the rays of truth that were scattered through the world into the common centre of their own system. This is fully admitted by Lactantius, Arnobius, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origen; and denied by none who have ventured fearlessly to investigate the *real* origin of Christianity.

CHARGE 5.

PORPHYRY,* whose very name is aconite to Christian intolerance, objects against Origen, that, being really a Pagan, and brought up in the schools of the Gentiles, he had, to serve his own ambitious purposes, contrived to turn the whole Pagan system, which he had first egregiously corrupted, into the new-fangled theology of Christians.

CHARGE 6.

CELSUS, in so much of his work concerning the "TRUE Logos" as Origen has thought proper to suffer posterity to become acquainted with, charges the Christians with a recoinage of the misunderstood doctrine of the ancient Logos.†

Charges thus affecting the character of *Origen*, the great pillar of the Christian church, cannot fall innocent of wound on Christianity itself. *Origen* is the very first of all the fathers who has presented us with a catalogue of the books contained in the New Testament. He was the most laborious of all writers; and his authoritative pen was alone competent to produce every iota of variation which existed between the old Pagan legends of the Egyptian Therapeuts and that new version of them

* Porph yry.—Theodoret calls him Ασπονδος ἡμῶν νπολεμιος, and Ο παντων ημιν εχθιστης. Augustin calls him "Christianorum acerrimus inimicus."

† Quasi refingerent—Τα του παλαιου λογου παρακουσματα.—Lib. 3.

which first received from him the designation of *the New Testament*.*

ADMISSIONS OF BISHOP HERBERT MARSH.

Bishop Marsh, in his *Michaelis*, the highest authority we could possibly appeal to on this subject,† admits, that “it is a certain fact, that several readings in our common printed text are nothing more than alterations made by Origen, whose authority was so great in the Christian church, that emendations which he proposed, though, as he himself acknowledged, they were supported by the evidence of no manuscript, were very generally received.”‡ The reader will do himself the justice to recollect, that Origen lived and wrote in the third century, and that “no manuscript of the New Testament now extant is prior to the sixth century; and, what is to be lamented, various readings which, as appears from the quotations of the Fathers, were in the text of the Greek Testament, are to be found in none of the manuscripts which are at present remaining.”§

ADMISSIONS, TO THE SAME EFFECT, OF THE EARLY FATHERS.

To charges of such pregnant inference, we find our Christian Fathers, in like manner, making answers that only serve to authenticate those charges; to demonstrate that they were founded in truth and not in malice; and that, answered as they were, and as any thing may be, they were utterly irrefragable.

“You observe the philosophers,” says *Minucius Felix*, “to have maintained precisely the same things as we Christians, but not so is it on account of our having copied from them, but because they, from the divine preachings of the prophets, have imitated the shadow of truth interpolated: thus the more illustrious of their wise men, Pythagoras first, and especially Plato, with a corrupted and half-faith

* See the chapter on Origen.

† “The Introduction to the New Testament by Michaelis, late professor at Göttingen, as translated by Marsh, is the *standard* work, comprehending all that is important on the subject.”—*The learned Bishop of Llandaff, quoted in Elsley's Annotations on the Gospels*, vol. 1. (the introd.), p. xxvi.

‡ Michaelis's Introduction to New Test., by Bishop Marsh, vol. 2, p. 368.

§ *Ibid.* vol. 2, p. 160.

have handed down the doctrine of regeneration.”* And Lactantius, after admitting the truth of the story, that man had been made by Prometheus out of clay,—adds, that the poets had not touched so much as a letter of divine truth; but those things which had been handed down in the vaticination of the prophets, they collected from fables and obscure opinion, and having taken sufficient care purposely to deprave and corrupt them, in that wilfully depraved and corrupted state they made them the subjects of their poems.†

Tertullian calls the philosophers of the Gentiles the thieves, the interpolators, and the adulterators of divine truth; alleges, that “from a design of curiosity they put our doctrines into *their* works, not sufficiently believing them to be divine to be restrained from *interpolating* them, and that they mixed that which was uncertain with what they found certain.”‡

Eusebius pleads, that the Devil, being a very notorious thief, stole the Christian doctrines, and carried them over for his friends, the Pagan philosophers and poets, to make fun of.§

Theodoret accuses Plato especially, with having purposely mixed muddy and earthy filth with the pure fountain from which he drew the arguments of his theology.||

Thus, if we may believe Eusebius, the beautiful fable of Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*, describing Phaeton falling from the chariot of his father, the Sun, was nothing more than a wicked corruption of the unquestionable truth of the prophet Elijah having been caught up to heaven, as described (2 Kings ii.), “Behold there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven;” the heathens being so ignorant as to confound the name Helias with Helios, the Greek word for the Sun.

The almost droll Justin Martyr gives us a most satisfactory explanation of the whole matter; that “it having reached the Devil’s ears that the prophets had foretold that Christ would come for the purpose of tormenting the

* Quoted in Paganus Obtretractor, p. 34.

† Lactantii Instit. lib. 3, cap. 10. Sic etiam conditionem renascendi, sapientium clariores, Pythagoras primus, et præcipuus Plato, corrupta et dimidiata fide tradiderunt.—*Min. Felix.*

‡ Tertul. Apolog. cap. 46, 47.

§ Κλεπτης γαρ ο Διαβολος και τα ημετερα κειρομυθων προς τους ιαντου υπο φητας.—*Euseb. proculdubio sed perdidit locum.*

|| Εξ ης ουτος λαβων της θεολογιας τας απομας το ιλνωδες και γινωδες αναμιξεν.—*Theodoritus Therapeut. libro 2, de Platone loquens.*

wicked in fire, he set the heathen poets to bring forward a great many who should be called (and were called) sons of Jove. The Devil laying his scheme in this, to get men to imagine that the true history of Christ was of the same character as those prodigious fables and poetic stories.”*

I render from the beautiful Greek of Theodoret, a passage of considerable elegance, in which the reader will trace the rising dignity of style, superior manner, and cultivated taste with which an historian of the fourth century could improve and varnish the awkward sophistry of the honest Christian Father of the second:—

“But if the adversaries of truth (our Pagan opponents) so very much admired the truth, as to adorn their own writings even with the smallest portions they could pillage from it, and these, though mixed with much falsehood, yet dimmed not their proper beauty, but shone like pearls resplendent through the squalors in which they lay, so that, according to the evangelical doctrine, the light shone in the darkness, and by the darkness itself was not concealed; we may easily understand how lovely and admirable the divine doctrines must be, secerned from falsehood, for so differs the gem in its rough matrix, from what it is when seen resplendent in a diadem.”†

CHARGE 7.

The Emperor Julian—who, with all his imperfections on his head, was an ornament to human nature, and can by no means be conceived to have wanted any possible means of information on the subject—objects against the claims of Christianity, what a thousand testimonies confirm, that it was a mixture of the Jewish superstition and Greek philosophy, so as to incorporate the Atheism of the one with the loose and dissolute manner of living of the other. “If any one,” says he, “should wish to know the

* *Ακούσαντες γὰρ παραγενήσομενοι τὸν χριστὸν, καὶ κολαθισομένους διὰ πρὸς τοὺς αἰεβεῖς, προσβαλλόντο πολλοὺς λεχθῆναι λεγομένους υἱοὺς τοῦ θεοῦ, νομίζοντες δυνάμεισθαι ἐνεργεῖν τερατολογίαν ἡγησασθαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τὰ τοῦ χριστοῦ, καὶ ὁμοίως τοῖς ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν λεχθεῖσι.—Justin. Apolog. 2.*

† *Εἰ δὲ καὶ οἱ τῆς ἀληθείας ἀντιπαλοὶ οὕτω κομιδῇ θαυμάζουσι τὴν ἀληθειαν, ὡς καὶ βραχεῖσι μοριοῖς ἐκείθεν σεσυλημένοις διακαλλύνειν τὰ οἰκεία ξυχχράμματα, καὶ πολλῶν ψευδῶν τὰντα μίγνυμενα μὴ ἀμβλύνειν τὸ σφαιτερον κάλλος, ἀλλὰ κἄν κοπρία καὶ φορντῶ καίμενους τοὺς μαργαρίτας ἀστραπτύνειν λίαν, καὶ κατὰ τὴν εὐαγγελικὴν διδασκαλίαν, τὸ φῶς, ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνειν, καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς σκοτίας, μὴ κρυπτεῖσθαι ξυνιδεῖν εὐπίστες, ὅπως ἐστὶν ἀξίεραστα καὶ ἀξιαγάστα τὰ θεῖα μαθήματα τοῦ ψευδούς κεχωρισμένα πολλὴν γὰρ δηπὸν διαφορὰν ἔχει μαργαρίτης ἐν βαρβύρῳ κίμῳ καὶ ἐν διαδηματί λαμπρῳ.—Theodoret. Therapeut. libro 2.*

truth with respect to you Christians, he will find your impiety to be made up partly of the Jewish audacity, and partly of the indifference and confusion of the Gentiles, and that ye have put together, not the best, but the worst characteristics of them both.”*

The answer to which charge, on the part of the advocates of Christianity, was, that they neither took them to be gods whom the Gentiles considered to be such, and so were not assimilated to the Gentiles; nor did they respect the deisidemony of the Jews, and so were not adherents to Judaism. Nor was it a small matter of triumph to their cause, to contrast the apparent contrariety of charges that were alleged against them, in that as Julian accused them of adopting the *worst* parts of Gentilism, Celsus had accused them of selecting the *best* parts.

THE CHARGES OF CELSUS.

It is never to be forgotten, that the charges of Celsus stand only in the language in which Origen has been pleased to invest them; nor is it any very monstrous phenomenon that such wholly different characters as Julian and Celsus were, should either of them, with equal conscientiousness, have esteemed those self same things the best, which the other considered the worst parts of Gentilism.

Celsus, an Epicurean philosopher, might very naturally think that an impostor acted with sound policy in giving to his new-fangled system all the advantages it could derive from the closest convenient conformity to the Epicurean carelessness of living, and indulgence in innocent, or even in perhaps not quite innocent pleasures; while Julian, all whose virtues were of the severest and most rigid self-restraint, looked with horror on the license which the doctrines of the apostolic chief of sinners had seemed to countenance in the lives and manners of the Christians. The charge of the Emperor Julian is in striking coincidence of verisimilitude with the apparent fact of the case, that Paul of Tarsus, who, in his Epistle to the Colossians, calls himself a *deacon* of the Gospel,† and who could have stood in that humble grade, only as a servant and mis-

* Εἰτις ὑπερ ὑμῶν εἰδελοὶ σκοπεῖν εὐρήσῃ τὴν ὑμετέραν ὀσείθειαν ἐκτὶ τῆς ἰουδαϊκῆς τολμῆς καὶ τῆς παρὰ τοῖς εἰθνεῖσιν ἀδιαφορίαν καὶ χυδαιοτήτος συγκειμένην, ἐξ αὐποῖν γὰρ οὐτὶ τὸ καλλίστων ἀλλὰ τὸ χειρόν ἐλκυσάντες παρυφὴν κακῶν εἰργασασθε.
—Julian apud Cyrill, lib. 2.

† That is in the Greek text.

sionary from the Therapeutan college; schismatised from the church, and set up in trade for himself. He opposed the ascetic discipline in which he had been trained, and thus drew to his party that large majority of ignoramuses which in all ages and countries are eager to embrace every part of superstition but its mortifications and restraints. There were innumerable other charges brought against the early Christians, which, as they impinge on their *moral* character only, and might be either true or false without *materially* affecting the evidences of the religion they professed, lie beyond the scope of this *DIEGESIS*. Their amount in evidence is, that they sustain the fact, that whatever the principles and conduct of Christians may be supposed to have been, they were never such as to conquer the prejudices or to conciliate the affections of their fellow men. Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny have spoken of them in the most disparaging terms; and though it might be that those really wise and good men were unfairly prejudiced, yet it must cost any man who is not prejudiced himself, an effort to think so.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES ADDUCED FROM CHRISTIAN WRITINGS.

THE New Testament is in every one's hands: the claims of the four gospels therein contained we have already considered.

The thirteen epistles, purporting to have been written by an early convert to Christianity, *who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious*;^{*} the anonymous epistle to the Hebrews; the one of James; one of Jude; two of Peter; three of John: and the Apocalypse, or Revelation of *St. John the Divine*; though all of them, except the Apocalypse, are admitted to have been written before any one of the four gospels; are entirely without date, and will read as well to an understanding or supposition of their having been written five or six hundred, or even a thousand years, either earlier or later than the period to which they are usually assigned. Certain it

* 1 Tim. i. 13.

is, that they contain not a single phrase of a nature or significance to fix with any satisfactory probability the time when they were written; but from beginning to end they proceed on the recognition of an existing church government and an established ecclesiastical polity which, on the supposition of its origination in events that happened later than the time of Augustus, must outrage all our knowledge of history, and all common sense, to be reconciled with the supposition of their having been written by the persons to whom they are ascribed: as 'tis certain that no such state of church government, that could be properly called Christian, existed or could have existed among the followers of a religion which had originated in the age of Augustus, or among any persons who had been his contemporaries.

The Acts of the Apostles is evidently a broken narrative, and gives us no account whatever of what became of the immediate disciples of Christ, or how or with what success they executed the important commission they had received from their divine master; save, that Judas the traitor is said to have come to a violent death, as a judgment of God upon his perfidy; and that Peter and John were imprisoned as impostors, after having received the Holy Ghost, and been endued with the gift of speaking all the languages of the earth (a miracle which no rational being on earth believes); and that James was put to death by Herod.

The last account we have of Peter in the sacred history, requires us to believe, that after having been delivered from prison by the intervention of an angel, his chains falling off, and the ponderous iron gate opening *of his own accord*, "he went down from Judea to Cæsarea, and *there* abode."*

The last we learn of Paul is, that "Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came into him; preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

The evident air and aim of this account, as far as it goes, is palpably incompatible with any notion of the apostles having suffered martyrdom; it rather seems to make an ostentation of their prodigious success, and their perfect prosperity and security, and *that* too in Rome, in

* Acts xii. 19.

the immediate neighbourhood, and under the government of the tyrant Nero: while the insinuation at least with respect to the melancholy end of Judas, is, that the apostles themselves would have considered martyrdom as dishonourable to their religion, and their being put to violent and cruel deaths, an indication of the divine displeasure, as it is evidently represented to have been, upon Judas.*

The names and order of the twelve apostles, in the last list we have of them, are

- | | | |
|------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Peter, | 5. Philip, | 9. James Alpheus, |
| 2. James, | 6. Thomas, | 10. Simon Zelotes, |
| 3. John, | 7. Bartholomew, | 11. Jude, the brother of James, |
| 4. Andrew, | 8. Matthew, | 12. Matthias. |
-

In the *Lives of the Apostles*, written by the eunuch *Dorotheus*, bishop of Tyrus, who died A. D. 366, we have the following brief account of the apostles respectively:

1. SIMON PETER.

SIMON PETER is the chief of the apostles. He, as we are given to understand by his epistles, preached the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Bithynia, and in the end preached at Rome, where, afterwards, he was crucified, the third kalends of July, under Nero the emperor, with his head downwards (for that was his desire), and there also buried.

2. JAMES.

James, the son of Zebedee, a fisherman, preached the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ unto the twelve dispersed tribes. He was slain with the sword, by Herod the tetrarch, in Judea, where also he was buried.

3. JOHN.

John, the brother of James, who was also an evangelist, whom the Lord loved, preached the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in Asia. The emperor Trajan exiled him into the Isle of Patmos for the word of God, where he wrote also his gospel, the which afterwards he published at Ephesus, by Gaius, his host and deacon. After the death of Trajan, he returned out of the Isle of Patmos, and remained at Ephesus, until he had lived a hundred and twenty years, at the end of which, he being yet in full health and strength (for the Lord would have it so),

* See this question settled in the chapter on Martyrdom.

in his own grave, and buried himself alive. There are some which write that he was not banished into the island of Patmos under Trajan, but in the time of Domitian, son of Vespasian.

The translator of this JOHN, St. Jerome, quotes the authority of Tertullian to prove, that in the time of Nero, he was thrown at Rome into a tun of hot boiling oil, and thereby he took no harm, but came forth after his trial stronger than when he went in. St. Augustine relates, that after St. John had made his grave at Ephesus, in the presence of divers persons, he went into it alive, and being no sooner in, and as appeared to the by-standers, indeed, they threw the earth in upon him, and covered him; but that kind of rest was rather to be termed a state of sleep than of death; for that the earth of the grave bubbleth and boileth up to this day after the manner of a well, by reason of John resting therein and *breathing*—a sign that he only slumbereth there, but is not really dead! And till Christ shall come again, thus he remains, plainly showing that he is alive by the heaving up of the earth, which is caused by his breathing; for the dust is believed to ascend from the bottom of the tomb to the top, impelled by the state of him resting beneath it. Those who know the place,” adds this conscientiously veracious Father, “must have seen the earth thus heave up and down; and that it is certainly truth, we are assured, as having heard it from no light-minded witnesses.”*

4. ANDREW,

The brother of Simon Peter, as our elders have delivered unto us, preached the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ unto the Scythians, Sogdians, Sacians, and in the middle Sebastopolis inhabited of wild Ethiopians. He was crucified by Ægeas, king of the Edessæns, and buried at Patris, a city of Achaia.

* “Idem Augustinus asserat Apostolum Johannem vivere atque in illo sepulchro ejus, quod est apud Ephesum, dormire eum potius quam mortuum jacere contendat. Assumat in argumentum quod illic terra sensim seare et quasi ebullire perhibeatur, atque hoc ejus anhelitu fieri. Et cum mortuus putaretur, sepultum fuisse dormientem, et donec Christus veniat, sic manere, suamque vitam scaturigine pulveris indicare : qui pulvis creditur ut ab imo ad superficiem tumuli ascendat statu quiescentis impelli. . . . Viderint qui locum sciunt—quia et reuera, non a levibus hominibus id audivimus. *Ad hanc rem satis superque satis testificandam utor.*—*Fabricii Codice Apocrypho*, tom. 2, p. 590, in notis.

5. PHILIP.

Philip, of the city of Bethsaida, preached the Gospel in Phrygia; he was honourably buried at Hierapolis, with his daughters. In Acts viii. 39, Philip is described as possessing the power of rendering himself invisible.

6. THOMAS,

As it hath been delivered unto us,* preached the Gospel of our Saviour Jesus Christ unto the Parthians, Medes, and Persians; he preached also unto the Caramans, Hircans, Bactrians, and *Magicians*! He rested at Calamina, a city in *India*, being slain with a dart, where *he* was also honourably buried.

7. BARTHOLOMEW

Preached the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ unto the *Indians*, and delivered unto them the gospel of Matthew. He rested, and was buried in Albania, a city of Armenia the Great.

The translator, Peter de Natalibus, informs us, that this St. Bartholomew was nephew to the king of Syria. Antonius, in his Chronicle; writeth, that some have delivered that he was beaten to death with cudgels; some, that he was crucified with his head downwards; others, that he was flayed alive; and others, that he was beheaded, at the commandment of Ptolemæus, king of *India*; but Peter de Natal, together with Abdias, bishop of Babylon, reconcile the whole in this manner: how that the first day the apostle was beaten with cudgels, the second day crucified and flayed alive, and afterwards, while yet he continued to breathe, beheaded.

With all due respect to such profoundly learned authorities, I could suggest *another* way of reconciling the whole matter. This *royal* apostle was especially distinguished for his miraculous power of rendering himself invisible, and slipping through the key-hole into bed-chambers, for the greater convenience of giving lectures to young ladies, on the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary.† This faculty he possessed in common with St. Philip.

* Surely this is a very suspicious sort of *wording* for the first and earliest testimony that can be pretended to the existence of so extraordinary a Thomas.

† Et cæpit quærere Apostolum, sed non invenit eam amplius. Factum est autem ut apparuit Apostolus ostio clauso in cubiculo ipsius dicens nihil carnale desidero sed scire te volo quia filius Dei in virginis vulva conceptus, inter ipsa secreta virginis. *Ohe! jam satis est! terque quaterque plus quam satis!*

8. MATTHEW,

The evangelist, wrote the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Hebrew tongue, and delivered it unto James, the brother of the Lord according to the flesh, who was bishop of Jerusalem. He died at Hierapolis, in Parthia, where he also was honourably buried.

9. JAMES ALPHEUS.

James, the son of Alpheus, was bishop of Jerusalem by the appointment of the other apostles. He was killed by St. Paul. Having been set by the Jews upon a pinnacle of the temple, Saul, who was afterwards called Paul, thrust him off; and while yet he breathed after his fall, one came with a fuller's club and brained him.

10. SIMON ZELOTES.

Simon Zelotes, that is, Simon the *Fanatic*, preached Christ throughout Mauritania and the Lesser Africa; at length he was crucified in *Britannia*, slain and buried.

11. JUDE.

Jude, the brother of James, called also Thaddæus and Lebbæus, preached unto the Edessæans, and throughout all Mesopotamia. He was slain at Berytus, in the time of Agbarus, king of Edessa, and buried very honourably.

These two apostles, St. Simon and St. Jude, are generally mentioned together, and seem to have been inseparably united through the whole course of their truly incredible adventures. Their commemoration is kept by the church of England on the 28th day of October. Their conjoint miracles of healing all manner of diseases, raising the dead till churchyards were completely useless, and worrying and tormenting the poor devils till they howled and squealed, and wished themselves back again in hell from whence they had issued; are but every-day work, common to them with all the rest of the apostolic community. But they were more especially distinguished by their holy zeal, and their exertion of miraculous energies in protecting the moral character of those whom they had once admitted into holy orders. * “ They had with them many

* Habebunt autem secum discipulos multos, ex quibus ordinabant per civitates presbyteros, et diaconos et clericos, et ecclesias multas constituebant. Factum est autem ut unus ex diaconibus pateretur crimen incesti. Erat enim vicinus filie Satrapæ cujusdam ditissimi hominis, quæ perdita virginitate partum edens periclitabatur. Interrogata autem a parentibus virum Dei sanctum et castum Euphrosinum diaconum impetebat. Qui tentus a parentibus puellæ urgebatur subire vio-

disciples, out of whom they ordained in every city, priests, deacons and clerks, and for whom they built innumerable churches. It happened that one of their deacons was accused of criminal conversation. The daughter of a wealthy satrap being found in the plight of the Virgin Mary, after she had received the salutation of the angel Gabriel, but not able, like her, to persuade the world that her pregnancy resulted from the *obumbration* of the Holy Ghost, upon being questioned by her parents, swore her child upon the chaste and holy deacon Euphrosinus, upon whom her parents were for taking the law; which, when the apostles St. Simon and St. Jude heard, they came instantly to the girl's parents, who, upon seeing the apostles, loudly accused the deacon of the crime. Then the apostle said, 'When was the child born?' And they answered, 'This very day, at one o'clock.' Then said they, 'Bring the infant and this deacon, whom you accuse, together before us.' And, upon the infant and the deacon being confronted, the apostles addressed the new-born babe, and said, 'In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, speak and tell us if this deacon got you.' Whereupon the babe, with most perfect and complete eloquence, answered, 'Gentlemen, I assure you that this deacon is holy and chaste, and has never ——.' (The reader must translate the rest on't for himself—the young one was a bit of a wag.) But the parents of the girl insisted that the apostles should make the child tell (if the deacon was not his father) who else *was*. The apostles answered and said, 'Oh, no; it is our place only to absolve the innocent, not to betray the guilty.' " There was evidently a good understanding between the apostles themselves and the young one.

12. MATTHIAS. -

Matthias, being one of the seventy *disciples*, was afterwards numbered with the eleven *apostles*, in the room of

dictam. Quod ubi Apostoli audiverunt, venerunt ad parentes puellæ. At illi cum adspexissent apostolos, cæperent clamare et diaconum reum hujus criminis accusare. Tum Apostoli: quando inquit natus est puer? responderunt hodie hora diei prima. Dicunt ei apostoli. Perducite huc infantem, et diaconum quem accusatis huc pariter adducite. Cumque in præsentia essent, alloquuntur apostoli infantem, dicentes: "In nomine Domini nostri Jesu Christi loquere, et dic si iste diaconus præsumserit hanc iniquitatem." Tum infans absolutissimo sermone ait, "Hic diaconus, vir sanctus et castus est et nunquam inquinavit carnem suam." Rursus autem insistebant parentes Apostolis, ut de persona infans interrogaretur inconti. Qui dixerunt: nos innocentes solvere decet, et nocentes prodere non decet.—*De SS Simone et Juda Abdiæ Historia Apostolica*, lib. 6, c. 18.

Judas the traitor. He preached the Gospel in Ethiopia, about the haven called Hyssus and the river Phasis, unto barbarous nations and cannibals. He died at Sebastopolis, and was buried near the temple of the Sun.

CEPHAS.

It appears from the Catalogue of Dorotheus, that Cephas, who was one of the *seventy* disciples, and not one of the *twelve* apostles, was the person whom Paul reprehended at Antioch, and that he was bishop of Cannia. For though Cephas is a Syriac word of the same sense and significance as Peter, or *Petra*, a *rock*,* yet have we this positive testimony of Dorotheus, who wrote *earlier* than Eusebius, and all the conceivable congruities of the case, supported by the explicit and positive testimony of Eusebius, and of Clemens Alexandrinus, that *Cephas* and *Peter* were wholly distinct personages.† By this understanding we evade the revolting absurdity of the supposition, that Paul, a late convert, should have taken upon himself to withstand Peter to the face, when he was come to Antioch (Gal. ii), while we retain the other horn of the dilemma, that Paul has, in his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians (chap. xv.), given an account of the resurrection of Christ, utterly irreconcilable with that of either of our four gospels.‡

ORIGIN OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

This critique is of most essential argument, inasmuch, as if valid, it tends to detect and cut off the sophistical artifice which would endeavour to connect the narrative and probable part of the Acts of the Apostles with the mystical personages and adventures of the Gospel, thereby aiming to reflect something of the air of historical probability which attaches to the mere journal of the voyages and travels of some schismatical missionaries from the Egyptian monasteries, upon the wholly super-

* It is in French only that the miserable pun on St. Peter's name is exact—"Tu es *Pierri* et sur cette *pierre*." The same is imperfect in Greek, Latin, Italian, &c. and totally unintelligible in our Teutonic languages.

† Ηδ' ιστορία παρα Κλημεντι—συ η και Κηφαν, περι ου φησιν ο Παυλος, οτι δε ηλθε Κηφας εις Αντιοχειαν, κατα προσωπον αυτω αντεστην, οτι κατεγνωσμενος ην, ινα φησι γεγονεναι των εβδομηκοντα μαθητων ομωνυμον Πιτρω τυγγανοντα τω αποστολω.—Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. 1, c. 12, C.

‡ Neither the PETER nor the JUDAS of the Acts of the Apostles are the same characters as the Peter and Judas of the Gospels, nor can the two histories be fairly reconciled.

natural *dramatis personæ* of the Gospel, and to make the one seem a sequel and a continuation of the other.

To this device solely, we owe the canonicity of the Acts of the Apostles, an evident fragment as it is, and an awkward jumble of fiction and fact, romance and real history. It was held necessary (so as it were to bring heaven and earth together) that some account, it mattered not what, should be crammed down the gaping throat of that natural curiosity which would want to know what became of *the glorious company of the apostles* after they had seen Jesus Christ ascend up through the clouds, pass through Orion's belt, and take his chair at the right hand of God. So late, however, as A. D. 407, or the beginning of the fifth century, the Acts of the Apostles had not gained general acceptance, or was rather too gross a finesse even for the credulity of the faithful.

Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople at that time, in his first homily upon the title and beginning of this legend, says, "To many this book is unknown, by others it is despised, because it is clear and easy." The first of his homilies upon the whole book begins with the sentence, "By many this book is not at all known, neither (the book) itself, nor who wrote and put it together."*

CASE OF ST. JUDAS ISCARIOT.

Judas Iscariot, though thrown out of the list of apostles, by an apparent conspiracy of the rest against him, had, in the contexture of the Gospel-story, certainly been chosen and appointed to the apostleship by Christ himself, had received and exercised the gift of miracles, had cast out as many devils, healed as many patients, and restored as many dead folks to life, as any of his apostolic brethren. His being the treasurer of the Mendicinity Society, having the bag, and bearing what was put therein, is a strong presumption that he was the most trustworthy among them. The sincerity and the intensity of his repentance for having betrayed Jesus—his returning the wages of iniquity which he had received, and above all, his offering himself to the imminent hazard of death, by coming forward and protesting to the innocence of his master, when all his other disciples forsook him and fled, and then

* Πολλοις τουτο βιβλιον ουδοτιουν γνωριμον εστιν, ουτε αυτο, ουτε ο γραψας αυτο κα συνθεις.—T₃, p. 1. Compare with Dr. Lardner's futile recalcitration, quoted in our Chapter of ADMISSIONS, p. 41.

terminating his own life in an agony of sorrow for his fault; are alleviating considerations, which must render him, with all but bad-hearted people, rather an object of pity than of hatred; and when Peter, who cursed and swore, and lied and perjured, till the very cock crowded *shame on him*, was forgiven upon a *wink*, Judas must certainly be considered as having been very unfairly used. But no ingenuity of critical chicane can reconcile the character of the Judas of the gospels with the personage who bears the same name in the Acts of the Apostles; they are wholly different characters.

*The Judas of the Gospels**The Judas of the Acts*

Repented ;	Did not repent ;
Returned the money to the chief priests and elders ;	Kept the money for his own use ;
Cast it down in the temple, and departed ;	Bought a field with it ;
Died by his own act and will.	Died by accident.

Next to the immediate apostles, in apostolic dignity, and first of all real personages whose existence there is no reason to doubt, however much there may be to question whether their adventures and performances were such as have been ascribed to them, are the two unapostolical evangelists, Mark and Luke, and that *least of the apostles*, who was not meet to be called an apostle,* Paul of Tarsus, the apostolic chief of sinners.†

MARK

The evangelist, according to Eusebius, was bishop of Alexandria. "He preached the Gospel," says Dorotheus, "unto the people of Alexandria, and all the bordering regions from Egypt unto Pentapolis. In the time of Trajan, he had a cable-rope tied about his neck at Alexandria, by which he was drawn from the place called Bucolus unto the place called *Angels*, where he was burned to ashes by the furious idolaters, in the month of April, and buried at Bucolus.

LUKE

The evangelist, of the city of Antioch, by profession a physician (i. e. a Therapeut), wrote the Gospel as he

* 1 Cor. xv. 9.

† 1 Tim. i. 15.

heard Peter the apostle preach, and the Acts of the Apostles as Paul delivered unto him. He accompanied the apostles in their peregrinations, but especially Paul. He died at Ephesus, where he was also buried;* and after many years, together with Andrew and Timothy, he was translated to Constantinople, in the time of Constantius, the son of Constantinus Magnus.

PAUL,

Being called of the Lord Jesus Christ himself after his assumption, and numbered in the catalogue of the apostles, began to preach the Gospel from Jerusalem, and travelled through Illyricum, Italy, and Spain. His epistles are extant at this day full of all heavenly wisdom.† He was beheaded at Rome under Nero, the third kalends of July, so died a martyr, and lieth there, buried with Peter the apostle.”—Thus far Dorotheus.

Though there can be no doubt of the existence of St. Paul, of his being entirely such a character as he is in the New Testament represented to have been, and that the epistles which go under his name are *competently* authentic, and such as without a most unphilosophical and futile litigiousness, no man would think of denying to have been written by him, excepting only a few immaterial interpolations; yet for the fact of his having been beheaded by order of Nero, or having suffered martyrdom in any way, we have no better authority than such as those who would have us believe it, would be ashamed to produce; that is, neither other nor better authority than that of Linus, the imaginary successor of the imaginary St. Peter in the bishopric of Rome, who would persuade us, that “after Paul’s head was struck off by the sword of the executioner, it did with a loud and distinct voice utter forth, in Hebrew, the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, while, instead of blood, it was nought but a stream of *pure milk* that flowed from his veins;” or that of Abdias, bishop of Babylon, who assures us, that when his head

* The particular care which this historian shows for having all his saints and martyrs authentically buried is, to attest the identity of their relics, which retained their miraculous virtue for ages, and thus achieved as many miracles after their decease as they had ever done while living. From the time when these worthies were buried till the accession of Constantius must have been upwards of 300 years, so that in the natural order of things, every particle of their bodies must have evaporated or mouldered away; but *Manet post funera virtus!*

† This heavenly wisdom is a very particular sort of wisdom.

was cut off, instead of blood, ran milk, so that the milky wave flowed all over the sword, and washed over the executioner's arm.*

In a church at Rome, at this day called *At the three fountains*, the place where St. Paul was beheaded, they show the identical spot where the milk spouted forth from his apostolical arteries, and where, moreover, his head, after it had done preaching, took three jumps (to the honour of the holy Trinity), and at each spot on which it jumped there instantly struck up a spring of living water, which retains at this day a plain and distinct taste of milk. Of all which facts, Baronius, Mabillon, and all the gravest authors of the Roman Catholic communion, give us the most credible and unquestionable assurance.†

It would be an injustice, however, to father such miraculous accounts exclusively on the writers of the Roman Catholic communion. We should not have even a single credible witness left to ascertain to us, that Christianity, in any shape or guise, continued in existence, or what it was, after it passed from the first to other hands, should we consider the most egregious, atrocious, impudent *lying* as a disparagement to the credibility of *Christian* historians. It is no fanatic or enthusiast who is himself deceived, but it is the calm, serious, calculating, most sincere, most accomplished, most veracious St. Augustin, who, in his 33rd Sermon addressed to his reverend brethren, fearlessly stakes his eternal salvation to the fact, which was as true as the Gospel, and for which there can be no doubt that he would as cheerfully as for the Gospel have suffered himself to be burned at the stake; that "he himself being at that time bishop of Hippo Regius, had preached the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to a whole nation of men and women that *had no heads*, but had their eyes in their bosoms; and in countries still more southerly, he preached to a nation among whom each individual had but one eye, and that situate in the middle of the forehead.‡ While the no less credible Eusebius assures us, that on some occasions the bodies of the martyrs who had been devoured by wild

* Flexis genibus, crucisque se signo muniens, cervicem præbuit percussori; E, cujus gladio, desecto capite, pro sanguine lac cucurrit ita ut percussoris dextram lactea unda perfunderet.—*Apostol. Hist.* lib. 2, p. 455.

† See the statement to the sense, not the letter, in Dr. Middleton's Letter from Rome, p. 127.

‡ Syntagma, p. 33.

beasts, upon the beasts being strangled, were found alive in their stomachs, even after having been completely digested.*

Such statements; and ecclesiastical history is little better than a continued series of such, must surely convince every impartial inquirer, that the professors and preachers of Christianity, however a few honourable exceptions may have from time to time arisen, (as never was the society so bad, but that there must have been some among them not quite so bad as the worst), yet generally they were men who had no respect for truth, and no governing principle but a wicked *esprit du corps*, which determined them *à toute outrance* to impose on the credulity and ignorance of the vulgar.

That there is no difference between the Popish legends and the canonical Acts of the Apostles.

The great difficulty is to draw the line between ecclesiastical history, and that which is truly apostolical; since it is hardly possible to fix on a legend so egregiously absurd, or a pretended miracle so monstrously ridiculous, in all that is absurd and ridiculous in Popish superstition, but that its original type and first draft shall be to be found even in our own canonical and inspired Scriptures.

After having laughed at St. Dunstan's taking the Devil by the nose with a pair of red-hot tongs, in the golden legend, we are made to laugh on the other side of the mouth, or rather to tremble and adore, at the account, which nobody may doubt, of the fate of the seven sons of Sceva the Jew, in conflict with whom it was the Devil who proved victorious, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. Nor was the wonder-working name of "Jesus, whom Paul preached," sufficient to lay him; for, said the Devil, "*Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?*"—Acts xix. 15.

In like manner we Protestants, who despise all the stories of miracles wrought by old rags, rotten bones, rusty nails, pocket-handkerchiefs, and aprons; that stand on no better authority than those monkish tales which our church has rejected, do bow with implicit faith to the miracles wrought by *relics*, which stand on the authority of those monkish tales which our church has *not* rejected; and it is to be believed, or at least not laughed at, under peril of

* Lardner, vol. 4, p. 91.

being sent to jail, that “*God wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul, so that from his body were brought unto the sick, handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out from them.*”—Acts xix. 12.

Here again is an egregious atopism.—How could St. Paul have *aprons*? or what use could Jews have of *pocket handkerchiefs*? Are we to forget that their sleeves and beards answered all the purpose, and saved washing?

We are at full liberty to have our mirth out at the story of St. Bartholomew possessing the faculty of becoming invisible, and appearing and disappearing, as the cause of the gospel required, because *that* story rests only on the authority of the apostolic history of Abdias, a few pages further on than our canonical Acts of the Apostles has continued to make extracts from it; but had it been introduced, as many arguments would have been adduced by our clergy to justify it, and as great peril of incarceration incurred for snuffing at it, as at precisely the parallel story of *St. Philip*, who, in the canonical part of the book, is described as riding in the air, as picked up by the Spirit of the Lord in one place, and popped down in another (Acts 8. 40).

That no such persons as the Twelve Apostles ever existed.

Thus the glorious company of the apostles, having glistened upon the world's darkness like the sparks on a burnt rag, go out in like manner, leaving no more vestige of their existence, or of any effect of the miraculous powers with which they are believed to have been invested, than “the bird's wing on the air, or the pathway of the keel through the wave.” No credible history whatever recognizes the existence of any one of them, or of any one result of all their stupendous labours and sufferings. The very criterion miracle itself, the most critical and important of all, that which if not true, leaves not so much as a possibility that any other should be so—the miracle of the *gift of tongues*, not only has no one particle of concurrent evidence in all the world to make it credible, or even to make it conceivable, but absolutely breaks down and gives way, and is attended by positive demonstration of its falsehood, even in the immediate context of the legend which relates it. In sequence, on the passage which instructs us that the assembled apostles were by the immediate power of God “enabled to speak all the languages of the earth in a moment of time,” and thus

unquestionably must have been rendered the most consummate and accomplished scholars that ever lived, we find Peter and John, the most distinguished of them, in the next scene, brought before the magistrates as notorious tricksters and cheats, and then and there availing themselves of their supernatural gift of eloquence to no better effect, than to show that *they were unlearned and ignorant men*, (Acts iv. 13).

The Arabian Nights Entertainments are more consistent. Consult the records of history, and what has become of these most extraordinary personages that ever existed, if indeed they ever existed? Not only their names are no where to be found, but the mighty works which should have perpetuated their names have no records. The churches which they are said to have founded, have all shared the fate of Alladin's castle: the nations which they converted, have all relapsed into idolatry; the light that was to lighten the Gentiles, only served to introduce the *dark ages*. Not only chronology and history withhold all countenance from the fabulous adventures of these fabulous personages, but geography itself recoils from the story; not only were there no such persons as themselves, and no such persons as the kings and potentates whom they are said to have baptized and converted, but no such countries, cities, and nations as *many* of those in which they are said to have achieved their mightiest works. Like their divine Master, their kingdoms were not of this world. Where, for instance, was the country of the Magicians, of the Amazons, of the Acephali, the Monoculi, and the Salamanders? Where but in the same latitude with Brob-dignag and Lilliputa?



CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE ARGUMENT OF MARTYRDOM.

From the self-evident absurdity of all arguments drawn from miracles, which could be of avail only to those who witnessed them, and even to them of no further avail than to make them stare and wonder, but to leave them in as great ignorance as ever as to the *what then*, or what inference, from an unaccountable fact to the truth or falsehood of an unaccountable doctrine, divines have been driven upon the dernier resort of a desperate attempt to connect

Christianity with a species of historical evidence arising from *the argument of martyrdom*.

Accordingly, in the latest or at least most popular treatise on the Evidences of Christianity which is now read in our universities, and generally appealed to as exhibiting the whole stress of the cause set in the best light, and shown to the utmost advantage, the whole burthen is laid on these two propositions :—

First, “That there is satisfactory evidence that many professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.”

Second Proposition. “That there is not satisfactory evidence that persons pretending to be original witnesses of any other similar miracles, have acted in the same manner in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts.”*

Such are the specific propositions on which the whole fabric of the evidences of Christianity is raised, by that great master “*of thoughts that are just, and words that are beautiful*,”† whose name and authority were urged to justify the cutting off from society of one whose only offence was, that he availed himself of thoughts quite as just, in words as beautiful, leading only to diametrically opposite conclusions.

Not to quarrel with the logic of these propositions, nor waste a moment’s indignation on the apparent insult offered to the acutest sensibilities of our nature, in thus couching conditions involving the eternal happiness or misery of man, in terms whose laxity of purport and indefiniteness of sense could intend no other drift than to evade conclusion, to disappoint solicitude, and to defeat examination;

We apply at once to this whole argument of martyrdom, these two grand conflicting propositions :—

First, That sufferings undergone by the first preachers of Christianity is not the kind of evidence which we have

* Paley’s Evidences of Christianity.

† Words of Sir James Scarlett, said to the prosecution of the Author in the Court of King’s Bench, October 24, 1827.

a right to expect that the good and gracious Father of mankind should have given to a revelation which he was pleased to make ;

Second, That it is absolutely *not true*, that the first preachers of Christianity did undergo any sufferings whatever in attestation of the accounts which they delivered.

In still briefer proposition, the argument of martyrdom is not true ; and it would be good for nothing, if it were true.

I. *That Martyrdom is not the kind of evidence which we have a right to expect.*

Against this first and primordial consideration of the business, a most preposterous and absurd war of nonsense and insolence is generally raised, to shelter and protect the desolation of the Christian argument. "*Nay, but O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? What right have we to demand that God should give to his revelation just such evidence as we please to think necessary?*"

To all which sort of language, though disgracing the style of authors who have acquired the fame of critics, scholars, and rational men, on all other subjects, we have only to bid observance be awake to the *petitio principii*, or entire begging of the question, which it involves. For they who write or preach on the evidences of the Christian religion, must at least be supposed to hold out that they have some *reasons* or *arguments* to offer, which shall induce men who before did not believe, to become believers ; or those who before did in some degree believe, to believe with a stronger degree of conviction than they otherwise would : (which is a branch of the same general purpose) : and to acquit themselves in the discharge of that duty which the apostolic injunction hath bound upon them—*i. e.* to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear.* But such an answer is a *veto* upon all reason, and a complete admission of entire inability to give one ; and, instead of indicating any disposition of meekness, is little short of an assumption to themselves of the most unqualified infallibility ; and brings their logic into a circle, which all rational men know at once to be downright idiotcy. For not only must they maintain that the evidence

* 1 Pet. iii. 15.

was therefore proper, because it is such as God has been pleased to give, but that God has been pleased to give it, because it was proper : thus assuming to themselves that very right which they impugn, and exercising that prerogative which they hold to be the highest pitch of impiety when claimed by other persons, or exercised to other ends than their's.

And this, their *argumentum in circulo*, is spun upon the pivot of another sophism in logic, the *assumptio ex post facto*. The propriety and sufficiency of their evidence would never have been dreamed of, if it had not been that such, and none other, was the best evidence they had to pretend ; and any other evidence whatever that they had chosen to pretend, they could just as well have pretended to be the proper and sufficient evidence as this.

The impropriety of the argument as it respects the character of God.

A moment's conscientious reflection must surely lead any rational mind to a conviction how essentially immoral and unfit, and how egregiously irrelevant and inconclusive any such sort of evidence to a divine revelation must be, and make the very most of it, and concede the very utmost in its favour. Is it in the compass of invention to conceive any thing more UNWORTHY OF GOD ? more disparaging and subversive of all respectful and honourable apprehensions, which, whosoever believeth that there is a God at all, ought to entertain and cultivate in his mind ? Or was there ever in the world a conceivable worse example of injustice and cruelty, than *that* involved in the supposition of the Almighty Governor of the universe choosing out his best and most accepted servants to send them on a message, the faithful delivery of which should bring on them the most horrible sufferings, and most cruel deaths ? What else is a Moloch ? or Belial ? What other notion can we have of a demon ? What dye of grimmer blackness can be added to that monster of your conceit, whom you have described as dealing thus with those who love and serve him best : whom you pourtray as a tyrant, whose commissions are fatal to those who hold them, who pays his best servants with bloody wages, whose embassies of peace are borne on vulture's wings, whose charities are administered in works of destruction, whose tender mercies are cruel ?

And what relevancy, pray, after all, between the suffer-

ings which any set of persons may voluntarily undergo, and the truth or falsehood of any doctrines they may have maintained? What consequence or connection between the endurance of punishment, and the utterance of truth, unless we have some means of being assured that it was impossible that any body should have been punished for uttering falsehood, and so outrage all notions of a moral government of the universe?

Do we, then, hold a revelation from God to be, in the nature of things, absolutely impossible?—We answer, no! Then, by what other possible means than those of miracles, and the sufferings of those who were the immediate channels of the divine communication, can we suppose the revelation to be conveyed? “*They shall no more teach every man his neighbour, saying, Know the Lord! for they shall all know him, from the least to the greatest; for the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*”—Isaiah.

A person who had sincerely persuaded himself of the divine authority of whatever purports to have been positively commanded or forbidden by Christ, would never be seen to darken the doors of either church or chapel.—“*Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy father which is in secret.*” What is the act, then, of attending public worship, but an act of public hypocrisy? And whose authority is it, that *they* respect, who fly in the teeth of so positive an inhibition?

But this would spoil religion as a trade; and therefore, like Christ’s professed indifference to the observation of the Sabbath,* and his most solemn forbiddance of oath-taking,† it becomes a dead letter, which every body reads, but nobody respects.

The impropriety of the argument as it respects the character of Man.

With respect to the character of man, knowing and feeling as we do, in every sentiment of our minds, in every impression on our senses, our liability both to false impressions and erroneous ideas, and that these are competent to urge men to act and suffer to the same extent as the most accurate impressions, and the most mathematical conclusions; that is, that men *are*, and have been in all

* Matt. xii. 8. † Matt. v. 34.

ages, as ready to become martyrs for falsehood as for truth : We ask,

How could sufferings, either voluntarily or involuntarily incurred, supply any sort of attestation to a doctrine ?

If such sufferings be voluntarily incurred, when they might as well have been avoided, what is to excuse such wanton and useless suicide ?

Surely the act of suicide is precisely the same, if a man rushes on a drawn sword, which he sees held in another man's hand, as if he held the sword himself. —And,

What right can any man have to expect that other men should believe him affirming to a fact upon the testimony of his senses; when they see him setting the testimony of his senses at defiance, and not himself subscribing to the argument of pain and smarting ?

If such sufferings were involuntary, where could be the merit, or what proof of the sincerity of the sufferers could they involve ?

If such sufferings, in *the natural course of things*, were inevitable upon the conduct which the first preachers of the Gospel adopted, and God be believed to be the author and director of *the natural course of things*, what stronger proof could God himself be conceived to give us that *that* conduct was wrong, and that *that* religion, which could only be propagated by such conduct, was false ?

Nor should we overlook the palpable injustice of the argument built upon the *long ago*, and probably greatly exaggerated sufferings, of the martyrs of Christianity, but which takes no account of the sincerity and self-denial of its conscientious victims ; that sympathizes, like Nero, in dramatic griefs, but forgets its own Oakham ; weeps for the scratched finger of any of its own faction, but is at ease in an aceldama of persecuted infidels.

Extraordinary fortitude, exhibited under great and cruel sufferings, could only be considered as involving an argument for the truth of the Christian religion, on the supposition that such fortitude was properly and strictly *miraculous* ; a supposition directly outraging all notions of either goodness or justice in the Deity who should choose to work a sanguinary and horrible miracle, when he might at once have better accomplished the same effect by better means.—And,

Lastly, in the case of Judas Iscariot, as given in the Acts of the Apostles, we have the judgment of the whole

apostolic college on the side of our proposition ;* the horrible and cruel death of the traitor being *there* specifically adduced as an argument of the divine displeasure against him ; thereby demonstrating that, in the judgment of the apostles themselves, the coming to a bad end should be read to the diametrically opposite inference of that of martyrdom ; that we should rather conclude, that “ so bad a death argues a monstrous life ;” and that the good and gracious Father of mankind would never have suffered those who had sought to please him, or preached a doctrine that was agreeable to him, to have had any occasion to suffer for it.

II. *That the argument of martyrdom is absolutely not true,*

Is demonstrable, distinctively, on these four grounds : 1st, That it is contrary to nature ; 2nd, That it is contrary to the general tenor of the New Testament itself ; 3d, That it is contrary to the evidence of history ; 4th, That it is positively denied by the very authorities on whose testimony alone it could be pretended.

1st. *It is contrary to nature.*—Credulity and easiness of belief are the essential characteristics of man, and especially of ignorant man.

There was nothing, and could have been nothing in the lives and conduct of such men as we must suppose the first preachers of Christianity to have been, but must have been calculated to win all men’s hearts, and have made them the great objects of favour, admiration, love, and confidence. It is as impossible but that they must have found friends, as it is impossible that Christianity could have been propagated, if they had not done so. We might as well believe in St. Augustin’s men and women without heads, as imagine that there were ever men, or whole races of men, without the natural affections and rational faculties that constitute men ; or that, being such, they should be insensible of the virtue, goodness, wisdom, and *miraculous gifts* of the first preachers of the purest and best doctrine that ever was in the world, or have suffered such men to undergo any sort of wrong or oppression whatever. It outrages probability ; it is unnatural ; it is impossible ; it is inconceivable ; it is the sheer end of all discourse of reason.

* Of course making the assumption, that there were such persons, and that such were their acts and counsels, *argumenti gratia*.

2nd. *It is contrary to the general tenor of the New Testament itself*; in that the Gospel of St. Luke is addressed to the most excellent Theophilus, a person of rank and distinction sufficient to prove that the Gospel, at the time of writing it, enjoyed the patronage of the great: in that Christ, by express precept, instructs his disciples, that if *they should be persecuted in one city they should fly to another*, (Matt. x. 23); a precept implying, not only that persecution would never be general; but authorizing and commanding them not to suffer themselves to be persecuted, but to get out of the way of it, even by having recourse to a *lie* or a *shirk*, when occasion should call for it: which is necessarily included in every act of absconding or flight.

Jesus Christ, by palpable example, shows that he would rather have seen the whole world perish than he would have been crucified, if he could by any means, fair or foul, have made his escape; and submitted at last to drink the cup only because it was impossible that it should pass from him.

The Apostle Peter asks of the Christians to whom his epistles are addressed, "*Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?*"* a sort of challenge which could not have been given if the Christians ever had been called to suffer on account of their religion merely, or were in any state of liability to suffer on that account.

The Apostle Paul, in the last authentic account of him, is described as existing in a state of perfect security and independence in Rome, under the government of Nero himself, and is so far from charging even that worst of all the Roman emperors with the spirit of religious intolerance, that he speaks of him as *the minister of God, not a terror to good works, but to the evil*;† a sort of language and doctrine that leaves us no alternative, but that either the whole of ecclesiastical history is a tissue of falsehood, or the New Testament is no better.

3d. *It is contrary to the evidence of history.*—Such abandoned and unprincipled wretches as the state justly punished for their crimes, would gladly be thought martyrs rather than felons; they would accuse their judges—as what felons would not—of partiality, and of condemning them for being Christians, especially as there were never wanting a number of persons sufficiently stupid and wicked to think that Christianity itself gave them a right

* 1 Peter iii. 13.

† Romans xiii. 2.

and privilege to commit crimes with impunity (a notion that wants not countenance in the New Testament itself*); and these persons, when suffering the due rewards of their deeds, would not fail to claim and receive the credit of being martyrs. The offensive conduct of such persons could not have failed to have occasioned innumerable mistakes, in which the innocent may have suffered with the guilty, and the Pagans may, upon the stimulus of intense provocation, have taken sometimes severe and excessive revenge on the insults put on their religion. A Jeffries, a Bonnor, or a *city of London Recorder*,† might occasionally have sat on a Pagan bench, but it does not appear that the Roman senate or magistracy, generally, ever lent countenance to any public measures of religious persecution. The code of Roman laws contains not a vestige of any statute that was ever enacted against Christians. Nerva, Trajan, Adrian, the Antonines, and Julian, were men of the nicest sense of honour, and of so strict and passionate an attachment to the principle of justice, that it is rather conceivable that they would have suffered martyrdom themselves than have put it into the power of their worst enemy to attain the purity of their administration. “If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would without hesitation name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus.”‡

That period embraces eighty-four years, from the 96th of the Christian era to the 180th, during which reigned Nerva, Trajan, Adrian, Antoninus Pius, and Antoninus the Philosopher. Nor can any age or any country in the world boast of a succession of reigning princes of equal virtue, wisdom, and humanity. The best of our *most religious and gracious kings* that ever swayed the sceptre over a Christian people, was never worthy to be compared with any one of these successively excellent sovereigns. “The edicts of Adrian and Antoninus Pius expressly declared, that the voice of the multitude should never be admitted as legal evidence to convict or to punish the unfortunate

* “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” (1 John i. 7.)—“If our unrighteousness commendeth the righteousness of God.” (Rom. iii. 5.)

† The little barbarian, in calling for judgment on the author, pleaded for the expediency of violent and corporeal punishment, on Feb. 7, 1828.

‡ Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 1, p. 126.

persons who had embraced the enthusiasm of the Christians.”*

What extraordinary motive, what new and never before heard of spring of human action can have been brought into play, to set men all at once persecuting the very best of religions, who had never persecuted any other that ever was in the world ; and to induce those unquestionably wise and good men, whose justice and generosity had never been impeached till then, *just then* to lay aside their justice and generosity, to be wise and good men no longer, but *to be converted* into persecutors, and to become enemies to the death of the meek and innocent followers of an offenceless faith ? Surely here is problem without solution, effect without cause, and improbability without evidence. To believe that the first preachers of Christianity, or their immediate successors, were the victims of persecution, we must shut out the evidence of all other histories but such as they themselves put into our hands, and determine to believe not only without evidence, but in direct contradiction to it. Nor even will such a degree of obstinacy make sure work for our persuasion that the Christians generally testified their sincerity by martyrdom, since,

4th. *It is positively denied by the very authorities on whose testimony alone it could be pretended.*—“ In the time of Tertullian and Clemens of Alexandria, the glory of martyrdom, with the universal consent of the Christian community, was confined to the singularly distinguished personages St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. James.”†

St. James is said to have been murdered by St. Paul, and therefore his death ought not to be laid to the charge of *Pagan* persecution.

The martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul is contrary to the indications of the New Testament itself, and rests on no better credit than that of the Apostolic history of Abdias, which the church has rejected as apocryphal.

“ Dionysius, the friend of Origen, reckons in the immense city of Alexandria, and under the rigorous persecution of Decius, only ten men, and seven women, who suffered for the profession of the Christian name ;” and Origen himself declares, in the most express terms, that the number of martyrs was very inconsiderable.

* Gibbon, vol. 2, p. 422.

† Ibid, vol. 2, p. 427.

Specimens of Martyrology.

The Roman legends tell of ten thousand Christian soldiers who were crucified in one day by order of the Emperor Trajan, or Adrian, on Mount Ararat ; on the strength of no better authority than which, our church of England daily repeats the palpable and egregious falsehood, "*The noble army of martyrs praise thee !*" The fact itself is of such a nature, even in the judgment of sincere Christians, as to be pronounced not only not true, but utterly, physically and morally, impossible to be true.

And of this character, and no better, are all the stories of martyrdom endured by Polycarp, Ignatius, and others, under the humane and just Trajan, and the martyrdoms of Sanctus, Maturus, Pothinus, Ponticus, Attalus, Blandina, and all the martyrs of Vienna and Lyons, who, if we will believe Eusebius, Addison, and, I blush to say, *Lardner*, suffered under the administration of Antoninus Verus, were fried to death in red hot iron chairs, and suffered such torments, as to be sure it was physically impossible that they should have suffered.

"The holy martyrs," says the veracious historian, "underwent such torments as are above all description." However he makes an attempt to describe them, and tells us, that "the tormenters who were employed to torment (the young lady) Blandina, tortured her all manner of ways from morning till evening, relieving each other by turns, till they themselves became feeble and faint with exertion, and acknowledged themselves overcome, there being nothing more that they could do to her ; and they wondered that she had any breath left, her whole body having been tortured and mangled ; and they declared, that any one torture used by them was sufficient to deprive her of life, much more so many and so great. But that blessed woman renewed her strength, and it was a refreshment and ease to her ; and though *her whole body was torne to pieces*, yet by pronouncing the words, 'I am a Christian, neither have we committed any evil,' she was immediately *recreated* and refreshed, and felt no pain. So after the executioners had given up the business of attempting to kill her, which they were by no means able to accomplish, she was hung up in chains, dangling within the reach of wild beasts. And this, no doubt, was so done by the ordinance of God, that she, hanging in the form of a cross, might, by her incessant prayers, procure cheerfulness of mind to the suf-

fering saints. After she had hung thus a long while, and the wild beasts had not ventured to touch her, she was taken down and cast into prison, to be reserved for *further torments*; where she still continued preaching and encouraging her fellow Christians, rejoicing and triumphing in all that she had gone through, as if she had only been invited to a wedding dinner: whereupon they broiled her whole body in a frying-pan; which she not at all regarding, they took her out and wrapt her in a net, and cast her into a mad bull, who foamed and tossed her upon his horns to and fro, yet had she no feeling of pain in all these things, her mind being wholly engaged in conference with Christ. So that at length, when no more could be done unto her, she was *beheaded*, the Pagans themselves confessing, that never any woman was heard of among them to have suffered so many and so great torments.”*

As for Sanctus, deacon of Vienna, when there was nothing more that they could do to him, “they clapped red hot plates of brass upon the most tender parts of his body, which fried, seared, and scorched him all over, yet remained he immoveable and undaunted, being cooled, refreshed, and strengthened with heavenly dew of the water of life gushing *from the womb of Christ*;† his body being all over wound and scar, contracted and drawn together, having lost the external shape of a man. In whom Christ suffering, performed great wonders: for when those wicked men began again to torture him, supposing that if they should make use of the same tortures, while his body was swollen, and his wounds inflamed, they should master him, or that he would die, not only no such thing happened, but, beyond all men’s expectation, by those latter torments his body got relief from all the disease it had contracted by what he had before suffered; he recovered the use of his limbs which he had lost; he got rid of his pains; so that, through the grace of Christ, the second torture that they put him to, proved to be a remedy and a cure to him, instead of a punishment.”‡

* Quoted from Eusebius by Lardner, vol. 4, p. 83, and revised from the original by the author. Notwithstanding the gravity of Lardner and Addison on this subject, I mightily suspect that this Lady Blandina was nothing else than a Shrove-Tuesday pancake;—a sort of Sir John Barleycorn. She would not be the first divine sufferer who had been made of a bit of dough.—Compare with pp. 58, and 288, of this *DIEGESIS*.

† *The womb of Christ*: so Dr. Hanmer renders it. It is not the only passage which serves to render the sex of Christ equivocal.

‡ Lardner’s translation, as far as it is followed, vol. 4, p. 87; the rest original, from Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. 5, c. 1.

Such is a fair specimen of ecclesiastical history, and such the trash which must be held to be credible, if the argument of martyrdom be so.

Against such evidence, which may well be considered as setting comment at defiance, we every now and then stumble on admissions of the Christian Fathers themselves that entirely exonerate the Pagan magistracy, not only from such charges as might be inferred from any supposable ground or outline of original truth in such narrations as these, but which clear them from all suspicion of ever having countenanced persecution on the score of religion, in any case whatever. Tertullian challenges the Roman Senate to name him one of their emperors, on whose reign they themselves had not set a stigma, who had ever persecuted the Christians; and the modest and rational Melito, bishop of Sardis, in applying for redress (which was instantly granted) to Marcus Antoninus from some grievances which religious people at that time had cause to complain of, expressly states, that a similar cause of complaint had *never before* existed.

Even if the evidence of the reality of martyrdoms incurred for the conscientious maintenance of the Christian faith in former times, were a thousand-fold more than it is (which it could easily be), or more than is pretended (which it could *not* easily be) it surely could not avail against the evidence of our own absolute experience, that the merit of this argument in our times, stands altogether and exclusively on the side of infidelity. None are the persecutors but Christians themselves. None are the victims of persecution, or liable to be so, but the conscientious and honourable opponents of Christianity. It is the deniers and impugnors of revelation, who alone give evidence of sincere conviction, in the voluntary abdication of station and affluence, and in the endurance of the most cruel and trying sufferings. It is our own times that have witnessed the virtue that has preferred the cell of solitary confinement, and the fate of felons and culprits with an approving conscience, to the professorial chair, the rector's mansion, or the prebendal stall, that might have been held as the *wages of iniquity*.

They are Christians, and of Christians the loudest and most ostentatious professors of Christianity, who alone discover the dispositions and tempers of persecutors, and are, of all persecutors, the most implacable, most cruel, most inexorable.—While those who are most conspicuous

in their professions of deprecating persecution, and who “lament that ever the arm of the law should be called in to vindicate their cause,” deprecate and lament it avowedly on no other ground than that of their fear that it should render its victims objects of a pity and sympathy of which themselves are incapable.—In their own *right charitable* phrase, they fear lest persecution should “go near to place the martyr’s crown on the loathsome hydra of infidelity ;” that is, they are not sorry for the sufferer, but they are sorry that any body else should be sorry for him. They would not spare the poor victim a single pang, nor take a knot out of the lash that is laid on him, nor whisper a comfortable syllable in his ear, nor reach a cup of water to his lip, nor wipe away a tear from his cheek, nor soothe his fainting spirit with a sigh ;—but they are sorry for the disturbance of the welkin—they begrudge him the pity and compassion due to his sorrows. If some way could be invented to do the business without a noise, it seems, for all their charity, it might be very well done.

One might fill libraries with works of Christian divines in protest against the principle of persecution—one act of any Christian divine whatever, in accordance with the *sincerity* of such a protest, would be one more than the world has ever heard of. Never did the sun see a Christian hand drawn out of the bosom to prevent persecution, to resist its violence, to say to it *what doest thou ?* or to redress the wrong that it had done.—Of what, then are such protests evidence—but of the foulest, the grossest *hypocrisy* ;—hypocrisy, than which imagination can conceive no greater.— James, ii. 15, 16.

The demonstrations of Euclid, therefore, are not more mathematically complete than the ratiocinative certainty that the whole argument of martyrdom, upon which the most popular treatises on the evidences of the Christian religion are founded, is as false as God is true.



CHAPTER XL.

THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS.

THE *Apostolic Fathers*, is the honourable distinction given to those *orthodox* professors of the Christian religion, who are believed to have lived and written at some time within

the first hundred years, so as to stand within a conceivable probability of having seen or conversed with some or other of the twelve apostles, and to have received their doctrine thus immediately from the fountain heads.

There are upwards of seventy claimants of this honour, exclusive of such as the pseudo Linus, and Abdias, bishop of Babylon, who pretends to have seen Christ himself, though no such person, no such bishop, and no such bishopric ever existed. The majority of these are mere imaginary names of imaginary persons, whose various actions and sufferings are altogether the creation of romance. The historians of the first three centuries of Christianity have taken so great a licence in this way, as that no one alleged fact standing on their testimony can be said to have even a probable degree of evidence. The most candid and learned even of Christian inquirers, have admitted, that antiquity is most deficient just exactly where it is most important; that there is absolutely nothing known of the church history in those times on which a rational man could place any reliance; and that the epocha when Christian truth first dawned upon the world, is appropriately designated as the *Age of Fable*.*

The title of Apostolic Fathers, is given only to the five individuals, St. Barnabas, St. Clement, St. Hermas, St. Ignatius, and St. Polycarp, of whom the three former have honourable mention in the New Testament; the two latter are believed to have suffered martyrdom, and each is supposed to be the author of the respective epistles which have come down to us under their names, which, notwithstanding, the church has seen reason to take for no better than they are—*supernumerary* forgeries. Had they, however, been retained in the canon of sacred Scripture, we should have had folios of evidence in demonstration of their authenticity; and withal the demonstration (which all religionists appeal to whenever they can) of penalties, fines, imprisonment, and infinite persecution, on all who had understanding and integrity to treat them with the contempt which *every thing of the kind* merits.

ST. BARNABAS—*Bishop of Milan,*

Was a Levite of the country of Cyprus, and one of those Christians who, having land, sold it, and brought the

* Rerum gestarum fides exinde graviter laboraverit nec orbis terrarum tantum sed et Dei ecclesia de temporibus suis mysticis merito queratur.—*Dr. Fell, Bishop of Oxford.*

money and laid it at the apostles' feet ; whereupon they changed his name from Joses into Barnabas, which signifies *the son of consolation*. So that he literally *bought* his apostleship ; and having gratified the avarice of the holy conclave, their historian bears him the honourable testimony, that *he was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith*. (Acts xi. 24.) St. Clement of Alexandria has often quoted the epistle that goes under his name as the composition of an inspired apostle. In the catalogue of Dorotheus it is said, " Barnabas was a minister of the word together with Paul ; he preached Christ first at Rome, and was afterwards made bishop of Milan : " and in the translator's preface to that catalogue, it is asserted, on I know not what authority, that Barnabas had a rope tied about his neck, and was therewith pulled to the stake and burned. We have no account of any miracles which Barnabas wrought in his lifetime, which seems rather hard dealing with him on the part of the apostolic firm, since he had paid a very handsome consideration to be admitted into full partnership. The *amende honourable* was made to his relics in after ages ; they became wonderfully efficacious in healing all manner of diseases. His dead body had the distinguished honour of giving a certificate to the genuineness of the gospel of St. Matthew, which was found lying upon his breast, written in his own hand, when his body was dug up in the island of Cyprus, so late as the year of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 489 ;* so rapidly was the Christian faith, and consequently the efficacy of the relics of the saints, extending.

" Any one who reads the Epistle of Barnabas with but a small degree of attention," says Dr. Lardner, " will perceive in it many Pauline phrases and reasonings. To give the character of the author of it, in one word, he resembles St. Paul, as his fellow labourer, without copying him."

Paley quotes only the single passage from the apocryphal epistle, which, he says, is probably genuine, ascribed to the apostle Barnabas, containing the words, " Finally teaching the people of Israel, and doing many wonders and signs among them ; he (Christ) preached to them, and showed the exceeding great love which he bare towards them."†

* Sigebertum Gemblacensem ad A. C. 489, itemque alios legas sub Zenonis imperio in insula Cypro repertum S. Barnabæ corpus, et super pectore ejus, Evangelium S. Matthæi *ἰδιογράφων τοῦ Βαρναβᾶ*.—*Fabricii*, tom. 1, p. 341.

† *Paley's Evid.* vol. 1, p. 119.

To so clear and distinct a testimony to Christ and his miracles; I subjoin an equally sublime specimen of this apostle's inspired reasoning, from Archbishop Wake's translation :—

“ Understand therefore, my children, these things more fully, that Abraham, who was the first that brought in circumcision, looking forward in the spirit to Jesus crucified, received *the mystery of three letters*; for the Scripture says, that Abraham circumcised three hundred and eighteen men of his house. But what, therefore, was the mystery that was made known unto him? Mark, first, the *eighteen*, and next the three hundred: for the numeral letters of *ten* and *eight* are I H, and these denote *Jesus*; and because the cross was that whereby we were to find grace, therefore he adds *three hundred*, the note of which is T; wherefore, by two letters he signifies *Jesus*, and by the third, his cross.

“ He who has put the engrafted gift of his doctrine within us, knows that I never taught to any, one a more certain truth than this; but I trust that ye are worthy of it.*

“ Consider how God hath joined both the cross and the water together; for thus he saith, blessed are they who put their trust in the cross, and descend into the water.†

“ Jesus Christ is the heifer; the wicked men who were to offer it, were those sinners who brought him to death.

“ But why were there *three* young men appointed to sprinkle? Why, to denote Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And why was the *wool* put upon a *stick*? Why, but because the kingdom of Jesus Christ was founded upon wood.‡ Blessed be our Lord, who has given us this wisdom, and a heart to understand his secrets.”§

SAINT CLEMENT, A. D. 96.

Bishop of Rome.

St. Clement is with great confidence considered to be the individual honourably mentioned by St. Paul in those words, “ *help those women which laboured with me in the Gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow labourers whose names are in the book of life.*”|| He is ordinarily

* Barnabas's Catholic Epist. in Wake, p. 176.

† Ibid. p. 180.

§ Ibid. p. 169.

‡ Ibid. p. 174.

|| Phil. iv. 8.

called *Clemens Romanus*, as having been bishop of Rome, in the first century, to distinguish him from the no less illustrious *Clemens Alexandrinus*, who was bishop of Alexandria, about a hundred years after. In the Chronography generally attached to Evagrius's Ecclesiastical History, his name is arranged as third in succession of the bishops of Rome from St. Peter, the order standing thus : St. Peter, St. Linus, St. Annicetus, or Anencletus, St. Clement.* There is but one ancient manuscript of his writings in existence :† his first epistle only is held to be genuine. Measureless are the forgeries which Christian piety and conscientiousness had for ages put upon the world under his name.

It is not without shrewd reason that the epistle which Paley quotes has been rejected from the place which it for many ages held in the volume of the New Testament itself.

The passage, however, generally adduced from this epistle to prove the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul, is too brief, and too evidently itself taken from some other authority, to admit of the fact being received on the evidence of this one single sentence, in one solitary manuscript of an author upon whom so many Christian forgeries have been committed.

Clement evidently refers to some existing and generally received accounts of the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul, of which accounts his Philippian converts must have been in possession ere they could be thus loosely and generally called on to "take them as examples."

Of the martyrdom of St. Paul, not the least account is traceable in the New Testament ; but the very reverse of the probability of such a consummation of his history is indicated in the last allusion to him which the sacred text contains : "*And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him.*" —Acts xxviii. 31.

This, in Rome—this, under the reign of the tyrant Nero—this, when the tyrant Nero was not only reigning, but resident in Rome, unquestionably looks much askew

* "He had been first bishop of Sardis, and was afterwards translated to the more lucrative see of Rome."—*Dorotheus*. So early was the office of a bishop a good thing !

† Lardner, vol. 1, p. 290.

on the probability of those horrible stories of peaceably and quietly conducted Christians being put to such horrible torments, as the interest of those who would harrow up our feelings with those stories, requires us to believe.

Of the martyrdom of St. Peter, in like manner, the only *authentic* record in the case deposeth not a syllable. The last mention of his name in the canonical Acts of the Apostles informs us, that after having successfully set the power of the magistrates at defiance, burst out of chains that "*fell off from his hands,*" and passed through an iron gate, "*which opened to him of his own accord, he went down from Judæa to Cæsarea, and there abode.*"* This is the *scriptural* account of the matter; and though no story in the Arabian Nights Entertainments could possibly be more absurd, yet nothing in ecclesiastical history could be more authentic.

On what authority, then, can St. Clement be supposed to remind the Philippians, that "Peter, by unjust envy, underwent not one or two, but many sufferings, till at last, being martyred, he went to the place of glory that was due unto him;" and that "Paul, in like manner, at last suffered martyrdom by the command of the governors, and departed out of the world, and went unto his holy place, being become a most eminent pattern of patience unto all ages?" Surely the *modernism* of this manner of description must strike almost the dullest apprehension. Here are neither place, nor time, nor circumstance specified, as we should look for them in an historical statement. And "by the command of the governors," forsooth! Oh, yes; any governors you please: Bonaparte, or the Great Mogul, I suppose. It is outrageous romance!

The merit of the invention, however, belongs to other hands. It will be found, on a critical investigation, that the source from whence Clement drew, and from which is derived also the common belief that the apostles suffered martyrdom, is the Famous and Renowned Apostolic History of Abdias, the first bishop of Babylon, who (*if we will believe,*) had been ordained immediately by the apostles themselves, and who with his own eyes had seen the Lord.

These ten books of Abdias, though rejected entirely by the shrewder prudence of modern Christianity, contain the continuance of that broken and irregular jumble of the real journal of some Egyptian missionaries with the fabulous

* Acts xii.

adventures of imaginary apostles, which the church retains under the name of the Acts of the Apostles.

Nothing can be more sophistical than the whole plan of reasoning, and system of exhibition observed throughout the laborious volumes of Lardner. His method is to sift the works of these Fathers for any expression of similar character or cast of thought to such as are found in the New Testament, upon which similarity he would draw the inference that they must have read the New Testament and have held it in the light of a divine revelation ; while he passes over the egregious anachronisms, the gross blunders, and the monstrous absurdities, which show those writings to be such as any one who sincerely wished to serve the Christian cause would wish had never existed. As they appear in Lardner's management, the reader is deceived into an apprehension that they were at least *respectable*.

St. Paul's 1st Epistle to the Corinthians is the only book of the New Testament quoted by Clement. 'As a parallel to 1 Cor. xv. 20, "*But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept,*" Dr. Lardner quotes from the 24th chapter of the first of Clement, the words, "Let us consider, beloved, how the Lord does continually show us that there shall be a resurrection, of which he has made the Lord Jesus Christ the first fruits, having raised him from the dead ;" where, in the same chapter of Clement, follows an argument from *seeds*, resembling St. Paul's, 1 Cor. xv. 36, 37, 38 ; but where Dr. Lardner wholly omits to let us know that Clement's main argument for the resurrection is *not* taken from the celebrated 15th chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, but from the no less celebrated and far more entertaining 15th book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,* where is the whole story of the phoenix regenerating itself from its own ashes, and returning every five hundred years, to die and revive again in the flames upon the idolatrous altars of the temple of the sun :—an argument which it is utterly impossible that St. Clement could have used, had the gospels then in existence been considered as of higher credibility than the stories of Ovid, or had he himself believed that the resurrection of Christ was more probable than the fable of the phoenix.

* Hæc tamen ex aliis ducunt primordia rebus;

Una est quæ reparet seque ipsa resemizet, ales :

Assyrii Phœnicia vocant.

Ovid. *Metamorph.* lib. 15, line 391.

SAINT HERMAS, A. D. 100.

Bishop of Philipolis,

Who is saluted by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, and whose work entitled *The Pastor, or Shepherd*, was, in the time of Eusebius, publicly read in the churches,* and in the judgment of Origen was held to be *divinely inspired*,† deserves all the respect due to an author who confesses himself to be a wilful asserter of known falsehood. Lardner, who makes large extracts from his writings, to prove thereby the credibility of the gospel history ; has the disingenuineness to conceal, and pass over entirely unnoticed, this characteristic feature of an authority that serves him well enough, at the time, to support his gospel credibility, leaving the character of the holy Father out of all weight in the consideration of his testimony.

I cannot send this apostolic father and his divinely inspired book to their eternal rest, in the judgment of my readers, with greater fairness, than by presenting them with a chapter as a specimen. The annexed is the whole of the fourth chapter of the second book, from Archbishop Wake's translation :—

“ 1. Moreover, the angel said unto me, Love the truth, and let all the speech be true which proceeds out of thy mouth, that the spirit which the Lord hath given to dwell in thy flesh, may be found true towards all men, and the Lord be glorified, who hath given such a spirit unto thee ;

“ 2. Because God is true in all his words, and in him there is no lie ;

“ 3. They, therefore, that lie, deny the Lord, and become robbers of the Lord, not rendering to God what they received from him :

“ 4. For they received the spirit free from lying ; if, therefore, they make *that* a liar, they defile what was committed to them by the Lord, and become deceivers.

“ 5. When I heard this, I wept bitterly ; and when the angel saw me weeping, he said unto me, Why weepest thou ?

“ 6. And I said, Because, sir, I doubt whether I can be saved.

“ 7. He asked me, Wherefore ?

“ 8. I replied, Because, sir, I never spake a true word in my life, but always lived in dissimulation, and affirmed

* Lardner, vol. 1, p. 305.

† Ibid. p. 551.

a lie for truth to all men, and no man contradicted me, but all gave credit to my word ;

“ 9. How then can I live, seeing I have done in this manner ?

“ 10. And the angel said unto me, Thou thinkest well and truly ;

“ 11. For thou oughtest, as the servant of God, to have walked in the truth, and not have joined an evil conscience with the spirit of truth, nor have grieved the holy and true Spirit of God.

“ 12. And I replied unto him, Sir, I never before hearkened so diligently unto these things.

“ 13. He answered me, *Now* thou hearest them, take care from henceforth, that even those things which thou hast formerly spoken falsely for the sake of thy business, may by thy present truth receive credit ;

“ 14. For even those things may be credited, if, for the time to come, thou shalt speak the truth ; and by so doing thou mayest attain unto life.

“ 15. And whosoever shall hearken unto this command and do it, and shall depart from all lying, he shall live unto God.”

St. Hermas was evidently a *Gnostic*, or one of the knowing ones. “ His principle,” says Beausobre, “ was, that faith was only fit for the rabblement, but that a wise man should conduct himself by his knowledge only.”* He seems to have escaped martyrdom.

ST. POLYCARP, A. D. 108.

Bishop of Smyrna.

“ It is a thing confessed and lamented by the gravest divines of the Roman Catholic communion, that the names and worship of *many pretended saints*, who never had a real existence, had been fraudulently imposed upon the church.”† I commend not my suspicions that this Polycarp may be one of the *unreal* order, but leave the reader to give all the respect he can afford to the testimony that would subdue our reason to a belief that a venerable inoffensive old man, who, after having lived in undis-

* Hermes . . . Gnostique. Son principe est que la foi ne convient qu'au peuple ; que le sage se conduit par la science.—*Beaus.* tom. 2, p. 731.

† Dr. Middleton's Preface to his Letter from Rome, p. 59.

turbed tranquillity in his bishopric under a Nero and Domitian, should have been dragged, in the 86th year of his age, to the cruel death of fire under the government of the philosophic *Antoninus*, and by the magistracy, to be sure, of that old rascal again, *Herod*,* I dare say the same who slew the children in Bethlehem : for chronology has nothing to do with matters of faith. “ Then came there a voice from heaven,” so runs the sacred story, “ saying, Be of good cheer, Polycarp, and play the man.”†

“ The proconsul demanded of him, whether he were that Polycarp, beckoning that he should deny it, and adding, ‘ Consider thine age—swear by the fortune of Cæsar : repent thee of what is past ; say, Remove the wicked.’ But Polycarp exclaimed, ‘ O Lord, remove *these* wicked ;’ and, after concluding a mystical prayer with the usual doxology at the end of a modern sermon, he was committed to the flames ; but the flaming fire framing itself after the form of a vault, or sail of a ship, refused to burn so good a man ; upon which a tormentor was ordered to be fetched, to whom they gave charge to lance him in the side with a spear, which, when he had done, such a stream of blood issued out of his body, that the fire was therewith quenched.‡ So that the whole multitude marvelled such a pre-eminence to be granted and difference to be shown between the infidel and the faithful and elect people of God, of which number this Polycarpus was one, a right apostolic and prophetic doctor of our time, bishop of the catholic church of Smyrna.§ But the Devil procured that his body should not be found, for many endeavoured and fully purposed to hold communion with his blessed flesh. But certain men suggested to Nicetas, the father of Herod, and his brother Dalces, to move the proconsul not to give up his body, lest the Christians, as they said, should leave *the crucified*, and begin to worship Polycarp.” It is added, that he suffered with twelve others who came out of Philadelphia.

There has been a great deal of the well-known Unita-

* Και υπηντα αυτω ο ειρηναρχος Ηρωδης.—*Eccl. Hist.* lib. 4, p. 97.

† Ισχυς Πολυκαρπς και ανδριζου.—*Euseb.* lib. 4, c. 14, p. 96, E.

‡ “ Who would have thought that the old man had had so much blood in him ?”—*Macbeth*.

§ Ο δε αντιζηλος και βασκανος και πονηρος αντικειμενος—ιδων το μεγαθος αυτου της μαρτυριας—πειτηδευσαν ως μη το σωματιον αυτου υφ’ ημων ληφθειη—και πτε πολλων επιθυμουτων τουτο ποισαι, και κοινωνησαι αυτου τω ογιω σαρκιω υπιβαλλον γουν τινες νικητην τον του ΠΡΩΤΟΥ πατερα αδελφον δε δαλκης—ως τε μη δουναι. κ. τ. κ.—*Euseb. Eccl. Hist.* lib. 4, c. 14, p. 99, lit. A.

rian tact of *reducing to probability*, practised upon our records of the martyrdom of Polycarp.

The original story unquestionably ran, that upon the piercing of the martyr's breast, a dove was seen to fly out of his body.—See the text of Cotelierius, in his *Apostolic Fathers*; and the remarks of Dr. Middleton, in his *Free Inquiry*. The important fact is excised from its place in Eusebius, for a sufficiently surmiseable purpose. It served its turn, while it would serve its turn; but it has become necessary that the evidences of the Christian religion should make some sort of peace with reason, and the most *entertaining* passages of sacred history are consequently to be sacrificed. Some divines are even for expunging the improbable parts of the New Testament itself. Alas, what would they reduce it to!

In the teeth of such self-evident proof of a fictitious character, and a fictitious martyrdom, Dr. Lardner *coolly* tell us, that the relation of the martyrdom of Polycarp, written by the church of Smyrna, of which he was bishop, is an excellent piece, which may be read with pleasure by the English reader, in Archbishop Wake's Collection of the Lives of the Apostolic Fathers.

The name of Polycarp, his bishopric, his martyrdom, are entirely unknown to rational or credible history.

ST. IGNATIUS, A. D. 107,

Is believed to have been bishop of Antioch in Syria, in the latter part of the first and beginning of the second century,* and is believed to have succeeded Euodius, who had been the first bishop of that see. The name *Euodius* occurs in the list of persons saluted by St. Paul, and this seems to be the reason of Eusebius for making a bishop of him, though nothing is known of him but the name. "Beside the bishopric," says Lardner, "the martyrdom of this good man, Ignatius, is another of those few things concerning him which are not contradicted." Basnage, however, puts the year of Ignatius's death among the obscurities of chronology. Indeed, those learned men who have attempted to fix the time, have no other grounds than the testimony of Malala a barbarian of the sixth century, and the Acts or Martyrdom of Ignatius, the genuineness of which Lardner himself admits may be *well* disputed. He concludes, however, that "as the epistles

* Lardner, vol. 1, p. 313.

we now have of Ignatius are allowed to be genuine by a great number of learned men whose opinion I think to be founded upon *probable arguments*, I now proceed to quote them as his.”*

The name of Ignatius is only twice mentioned by Origen, and that in so cursory a manner as to preclude any inference that Origen himself had any certain knowledge of his history. The whole story of his martyrdom is so utterly incongruous with time and circumstance, as to lead to no other rational conclusion than the probability that he is altogether the figment of that pious romance in which ecclesiastical historians have ever delighted—another name to be added to the long list of saints and martyrs, which even the more intelligent of Roman Catholic writers have been constrained to admit never existed at all, but were the baseless fabric of a vision, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. The epistles ascribed to Ignatius are admitted by all parties to have been most extensively altered from the first or earlier drafts of them ; but such as they are, even on a momentary reverie of their supposeable genuineness, they afford no testimony to any one of the essential facts of the Christian story. Written whenever, or by whomsoever we suppose them to be, 'tis certain that the writer held out nothing so little as the notion that the events on which the Gospel is founded, had ever really happened. Let his mode of reasoning tell its own story ! This it is.

“IGNATIUS, which is called Theophorus,† to the church which is at Ephesus in Asia, most deservedly happy, being blessed through the greatness and fullness of God the Father, and predestinated before the world began, that it should be always unto an enduring and unchangeable glory, being united and chosen through his true passion, according to the will of the Father, and Jesus Christ our God ; all happiness by Jesus Christ and his undefiled grace.

“There is one physician, both fleshly and spiritual, made and not made—God incarnate, true life in death, both of Mary and of God—first passible, then impassible, even Jesus Christ.

“My soul be for yours ; and I myself the expiatory

* Lardner's words, vol. 1. p. 316.

† *Theophorus*, i. e. *one who carries God within him*—a name of the same stock as *Praise-God Barebone*,—another edition of Polycarp's intercostal pigeon.

offering for your church of Ephesus, so famous throughout the world."

19th Chapter.—"Now the virginity of Mary, and he who was born of her, was kept in secret from the prince of this world, as was also the death of our Lord: three of the mysteries the most spoken of throughout the world, yet done in secret by God. How then was our Saviour manifested to the world? A star shone in heaven beyond all the other stars, and its light was inexpressible, and its novelty struck terror into men's minds; all the rest of the stars, together with the sun and moon, were the chorus to this star; but this star sent out its light exceedingly above them all, and men began to be troubled to think whence this new star came, so unlike to all the others. Hence all the power of magic became dissolved, and every bond of wickedness was destroyed; men's ignorance was taken away, and the old kingdom abolished; God himself appearing in the form of a man, for the renewal of eternal life. From thence began what God had prepared, from thenceforth things were disturbed, forasmuch as he designed to abolish death."*

Thus far from Archbishop Wake's English translation. Among the passages which Lardner extracts are, from his Epistle to the Philadelphians, the following:—

"Behold, I have heard of some who say, Unless I find it in the ancients, I will not believe in the Gospel; and I said unto them, It is written: they answered me, It is not mentioned. But to me, instead of all ancients, is Jesus Christ; and the uninterpolated antiquities are his cross, and his death and resurrection, and the faith which is by him."†

Archbishop Wake's Collection, in English, and Mr. Hone's Apocryphal New Testament, supply the reader with so many of the epistles of Ignatius as it suited the purpose of Dr. Lardner to recognize. We have, however, a *billet-doux* of this holy father written to the Virgin Mary, and her answer to it, of equal authenticity to any other

* Η παρθενία μαριας και ο τοκετης αυτης, ομοιως και ο θανατος του κυριου τρια μυστηρια κραυγης, ατινα εν ησυχια θεου επραχθη πως ουν εφανερωθη τοις αιωσιν? Αστηρ εν ουρανω, ελαμψεν υπερ παντας τους αστερας, και το φως αυτου ανεκλαλητον ην, και ξενισμον παρειχεν η καινοτης αυτου τα δε λοιπα παντα αστρα αμα ηλιω και σεληνη χορος εγενετο τω αστερι.—κ. τ. λ.

† Εκουσα-τινων λεγοντων οτι εαν μη εν τοις αρχαιοις ευρω, εν τω ευαγγελιω ου πιστευω και λεγοντος μου αυτοις, οτι γεγραπται, επεκριθησαν μοι οτι ου προκειται εμοι δε αρχεια εστιν Ιησους Χριστος τα αδικτα αρχεια ο σταυρος αυτου.—κ. τ. λ.
Πιστευω bears a future sense.

writings of the first century, and even in some respects of superior evidence.

The learned and ingenuous Peter Stalloixus, who had for some time, through the craft and subtlety of Satan, been tempted to doubt the genuineness of this correspondence, subsequently avows his repentance of that dangerous scepticism, and declares that the arguments of that serious writer, Flavius Dexter, had so convinced his mind, that he dared no longer hold their claims as questionable.* They are as follows :—

The Epistle of the blessed Ignatius, to the holy Virgin Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.†

“To the Christ-bearing Maria, her own Ignatius sendeth his compliments.

“You ought to comfort and console me, who am a new convert and a disciple of your friend John ; for I have learned things wonderful to be told concerning your Jesus, and am astonished at the hearing ; but I desire from my very soul to be certified immediately by yourself, who wast always familiar and conjoined with him, and privy to his secrets, concerning the things I have heard. I have written to you other epistles also, and have asked concerning the same things.—Farewell ; and let the new converts who are with me be comforted by thee, and from thee, and in thee. Amen.”

The blessed Virgin's Answer.

“To Ignatius, the beloved fellow disciple, the humble handmaid of Christ Jesus sendeth her compliments.‡

“The things which you have heard and learned from John concerning Jesus are true ; believe them, cleave to

* This divine was one of the thousands who reason that there can be no danger in believing too much, belief being at any rate the safe side ; for if the moon after all should prove to be made of a green cheese, what will become of philosophers !

† Christiferae Mariæ, suus Ignatius ! Me neophytum Johannisque tui discipulum, confortare et consolari debueras. De Jesu enim tuo percepi mira dictu, et stupor factus sum ex auditu. A te autem quæ semper ei fuisti familiaris et conjuncta, et secretorum ejus conscia, desidero ex animo fieri certior de auditis. Scripsi tibi etiam alias, et rogavi de eisdem. Valeas : et neophyti qui mecum sunt ex te et per te, et in te confortentur. Amen.

‡ Ignatio delecto condiscipulo humilis ancilla Christi Jesu. De Jesu quæ a Johanna audisti et didicisti, vera sunt. Illa credas : illis inhæreas et Christianitatis susceptæ votum firmiter teneas, et mores et vitam voto conformes. Veniam autem cum Johanne, te et qui tecum sunt visere. Sta in fide, et viriliter age, nec te commoveat persecutionis austeritas, sed valeat et exsultet spiritus tuus in Deo Salutari tuo. Amen.—*Fabricii, Cod. Apoc. tom. 2, p. 841.*

them—hold fast the vow you have made to the Christianity which you have embraced, and conform your life and manners to that vow ; and I and John will come together to visit you. Stand firm in the faith ; act manfully, nor let the sharp severity of persecution move you. But may your soul fare well, and rejoice in God your Saviour. Amen.”

To be sure these precious epistles were not forthcoming before the faith of the church was ripe to receive them ; being first published at Paris in the year 1495, but they are none the less genuine on that account ; nor is there a single argument that can be urged against them but what, in parity of application, would be fatal to the credibility of either of our four gospels. Nothing hinders but that these jewels might have lain hid under the miraculous keeping of divine providence, till the proper time was arrived for their being brought to light and set to shine in the bright diadem of Christian evidences. And as for all arguments drawn from chronology, geography, and other profane sciences, Christians have ever found their best policy to consist in regarding those who adduced them as objects of contempt, in committing their writings unread to the flames, and themselves unheard to gaols and dungeons. It may, however, be a profitable exercise for the ingenuity of believers to try if they can imagine or invent a single sentiment of hostility, expression of scorn, or action of cruelty, that could be justly merited by the rejecters of the writings contained in the New Testament, that would not, but a few years back, have seemed with equal justice to be merited by the impugnors of the epistles of Ignatius.

RESULT.

Here ends the utmost extent of testimony to the facts of the Christian history to be derived from the apostolic Fathers,—that is, from all who can be pretended to have written or lived at any time within a hundred years of the birth of Christ. It is not possible to produce so much as one single sentence or manner of expression from any one, friend or enemy, historian or divine, maintainer or impugnor of the Christian doctrines, within the first century ; the like of which we can conceive to have been used by any person who had been witness of the facts on which the doctrines are founded, or contemporary of those who had been witnesses, or who had believed that those facts

had really happened, or had so much as heard that there were any persons on earth that had seriously asserted that they had happened. The language of these Fathers, who are accounted orthodox, to say nothing of what we may hereafter gather from heretical information, is every where the language of a religious fatuity, childish beyond all names of childishness—foolish as folly itself. We should just as well find evidence and authentication to Magna Charta in the scribblings of an idiot on a wall, or make out the particulars of the Punic wars from the records of a baby-house, as discover a trace of testimony to *fact* in any documents of the Fathers of the first century. It remains only for those who, after an elapse of eighteen centuries, have moulded or new-fangled to themselves a system which they would now have us consider as “worthy of all acceptance,” to show how that which had so little evidence at first, could come to have *more* afterwards ; or how what was never known nor spoken of but as a matter of imagination, conceit, and faith, in the first century, should come to have a right to be put on the score of historical evidence at any later period.

The orthodox Fathers (as far as doctrine is concerned with orthodoxy) seem only to be distinguished from the heretics, in that they occasionally use a strength of language in their descriptions of allegorical figments, which might seem to approximate to the style of history, and might make what they only intended as emblems, pass for actual circumstances. Yet against such an acceptance of such occasional over-drivings of the allegory, we have to consider that we are in possession, not only of the argument arising from the natural improbability of such allegorical exaggerations when mistaken for facts, and the total absence of all corroborative and coincident testimony which could by no possibility be conceived to have been wanting if such facts had ever happened ; but we have the concurrent, and it may be called unanimous consent of the whole body of Christian dissenters (that is, in the church term, *the heretics*), who from the very first, and all along, never ceased to maintain and teach, that no such a person as Jesus Christ ever existed, and that all the evangelical statements of his miracles, actions, sufferings, birth, death, and resurrection, were to be understood in a high and mystical sense, and not, according to the letter as facts that had ever happened ; and this, too, confirmed by admissions of those who are called orthodox themselves, in

many positive passages ; unabated by so much as a single sentence that can be produced from any one writer within the first hundred years, which is such as he would have written, or would have suited his character to write, had he believed that the Gospel had been founded upon historical fact. And absolutely the only difference between Paganism and Christianity—Christians themselves being judges—was the difference between the allegorical fictions in which the one or the other couched the same physical theorems ; as is demonstrated, without need of further comment, by the juxta-position of their respective texts :

Julius Firmicius,
in description of the
Pagan Mysteries,
quotes *Pagan Priests*.

* But in those funerals and lamentations which are annually celebrated in honour of Osiris, their defenders wish to pretend a physical reason ; they call the seeds of fruit, Osiris, the earth, Isis, the *natural heat*, Typhon ; and because the fruits are ripened by the natural heat, are collected for the life of man, and are separated from their matrimony to the earth, and are sown again when winter approaches, this they would have to be the death of Osiris ; but when the fruits, by the genial fostering of the earth, begin again to be generated by a new procreation, this is the finding of Osiris.

* Sed in his funeribus et luctibus, defensores eorum volunt addere physicam rationem. Frugum semina Osirim dicentes esse, Isim terram, Typhonem calorem. Et quia maturatæ fruges calore, ad vitam hominis colliguntur, et a terræ consortio separantur, et rursus appropinquante hyeme seminantur : hanc volunt esse mortem Osiridis, cum fruges redduntur : inventionem vero, cum fruges genitali terræ fomento conceptæ, nova rursus, cæperint procreatione generari.—*De Errore Profanarum Religionum*, p. 6.

Beausobre,
in description of the
Christian Mysteries,
quotes *Christian Fathers*.

† In one word, the suffering Jesus is nothing else than what the Manichæans called the members of God ; that is to say, the celestial substance, or the souls which have descended from heaven.

The earth is the Virgin ; the heavenly substance which is in the earth, is the substance of the Virgin, of which Jesus Christ was formed ; the Holy Ghost is the natural heat, by whose virtue the earth conceived him ; and he becomes an infant in being made to pass through the plants, and from thence again into heaven.

† En un mot, le *Jesu Passible*, n'est autre chose que les Manichéens appelloient les membres de Dieu, c'est à dire la substance celeste, ou les ames qui sont descendues du ciel.—*Beausobre Histoire des Dogmes de Manichee*, liv. 8, c. 4, tom. 2, p. 556.

La terre est la Vierge, la substance celeste, qui est dans la terre, est la substance Virginal qui compose Jesus ; S. Esprit est l'agent par la vertu duquel la terre le conçoit, est l'enfante en le faisant passer dans les plantes, et de là dans le ciel.

With more than the significancy that will strike one at the first sight, has the learned Montfaucon observed, that “when once a man begins to use his own judgment in matters of religion, it is no wonder that he should frequently be in error, since all things are uncertain, when once we depart from what the church has decreed :” *—that is, in other words, there is no other real argument for the truth of the Christian religion, than “*He that believeth not shall be damned!*”—Mark xvi. 16.



CHAPTER XLI,

THE FATHERS OF THE SECOND CENTURY.

PAPIAS, A. D. 116.

Bishop of Hierapolis.

THE first of all the Fathers of the second century, and next immediately following on those of the first to whom exclusively is applied the distinction *apostolical*, is PAPIAS, placed by Cave at the year 110 ; according to others, he flourished about the year 115 or 116. He is said by some to have been a martyr. Irenæus speaks of him as a hearer of St. John, and a companion of Polycarp. †Papias, however, in his preface to his five books, entitled *An Explication of the Oracles of the Lord*, does not himself assert that he heard or saw any of the holy apostles, but only that he had received the things concerning the faith from those who were well acquainted with them. “Now we are to observe,” says Eusebius, “how Papias, who lived at the same time, mentions a wonderful relation he had received from Philip’s daughters. For he relates, that in his time a dead man was raised to life. He also relates another miracle of Justus, surnamed Barsabas, that he drank deadly poison, and, by the grace of the Lord, suffered no harm.” This *deadly* poison was certainly not arsenic.

Dr. Lardner concludes his very brief account of this Father, with a remark which, from any pen but his, would

* Cum quis eo devenit ut fidei dogmata ex sui judicii arbitrio definiat, nihil mirum est, si frequenter aberret : omnia quippe sunt incerta, cum semel ab ecclesie, statutis discessum est.—*Montfaucon in prolegom. ad Euseb. Comment in Psalmos.*

† I claim to be excused from giving the Greek text in all cases in which the translation is not my own. This is Dr. Lardner’s.

bear the character of drollery. Immediately after telling us that "Papias was a man of small capacity," he adds, "But I esteem the testimony he has given to the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark, and to the first epistle of St. Peter and St. John, very valuable; but if Papias had been a wiser man, he had left us a confirmation of many more books of the New Testament." *

It was convenient, however, for Dr. Lardner, and indeed essential to the policy of his whole work, entirely to suppress the important evidence by which his readers might be furnished with the means of estimating the value of this testimony for themselves. It is perhaps a very different impression of the character of this primitive bishop, and of the value of his testimony, which the reader would be led to form, upon consideration of the evidence arising from his writings themselves as preserved to us on the authority of his admirer and disciple Irenæus, in which he gravely assures us, that he had immediately learned from the evangelist St. John himself, that "the Lord taught and said, that the days shall come in which vines shall spring up, each having ten thousand branches, and in each branch shall be ten thousand arms, and on each arm of a branch ten thousand tendrils, and on each tendril ten thousand bunches, and on each bunch ten thousand grapes, and each grape, on being pressed, shall yield five and twenty gallons of wine; and when any one of the saints shall take hold of one of these bunches, another shall cry out, 'I am a better bunch, take me, and bless the Lord *by* me.' "† The same infinitely silly metaphors of multiplication by ten thousand, are continued with respect to grains of wheat, apples, fruits, flowers, and animals beyond all endurance, precisely after the fashion of that famous *sortes* of the nursery upon *the House that Jack built*, the malt, the rat, the cat, the dog, the cow, &c. : all which Jesus concluded by saying, "And these things are believable by all believers; but Judas the traitor not believing, asked him, But how shall things that shall propagate thus be brought to an end by the Lord? And the Lord answered him and said, Those who

* Lardner, under the head *Papias*.

† Docebat Dominus et dicebat venient dies in quibus nascentur vinee, singulae dena millia palmitum habentes, et in uno palmitate dena millia brachiorum, et in uno brachio palmitis dena millia flagellorum, et in uno quoque flagello, dena millia botrum, et in unoquoque botro, dena millia acinorum, et unumquodque acinum expressum dabit viginti quinque metretas vini. Et cum eorum apprehenderit aliquis sanctorum botrum, alius clamabit. Botrus ego melior sum, me sume, per me Dominum benedic.—*Hæc Irenæi textus translatio Alberti Fabricii est.*

shall live in those times shall see.”* But even this Christian conceit wants the merit of originality. It is a poor plagiarism from the form of adulation in which the sovereigns of India were wont to be addressed, which was as follows :

“ May the king live for a thousand years, and the queen for a thousand years lie in his bed ; and may each of those years consist of a thousand months, and each of those months of a thousand days, and each of those days of a thousand hours, and each of those hours be a thousand years.” †

Papias, however, notwithstanding his intimacy with the Evangelist St. John, and the value of his testimony to the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, fell into the *slight error* of believing that no such an event as the crucifixion ever happened, but that Jesus Christ lived to be a very old man, and died in peace in the bosom of his own family. Papias, with all his absurdities, had some respect for *poetical justice*, would have wound us up the scene decently, and give us gospel quite as true, though not so bloody.

QUADRATUS, A. D. 119.

Bishop of Athens.

The testimony on which the advocates of Christianity lay the greatest stress, is that of QUADRATUS. For earliness of time and *apparent* distinctiveness of attestation, they have no other, equal, or second to it.

He is the only writer, up to the period of the time of his existence, who has spoken of the miracles of our Saviour, in a sort of language which might make it seem that he believed them himself, and took them to be historical events. He was endued, says the Chronography ‡ with the gift of prophecy, and wrote an Apology to the emperor Adrian. He is not, however, placed by Lardner in his proper place as an Apostolic Father, or as next to an Apostolic Father, for reasons, which it is impossible for the earnest inquirer after truth not to suspect. He is of the same age with Ignatius, and has left us, says Paley, the following noble testimony. §

* Et adjecit (*scil.* Jesus) dicens, Hæc autem credibilia sunt credentibus. Et Juda, inquit proditore, non credente, et interrogante : Quomodo ergo tales genitura a Domino perficientur ? Dixisse Dominum : Videbunt qui venient in illa.

† Vir. clar. Thomas Hyde de Schachilatio et Nerdiludio.—*Citante Fabricio ad locum.*

‡ Which I have frequently quoted. It is that by Melmoth Hammer, to his edition of Eusebius, Evagrius, and Socrates, A. D. 1649.

§ Paley's Evidences of Christianity, vol. 1. p. 122.

The testimony of Quadratus.

“The works of our Saviour were always conspicuous, for they were real; both those that were healed, and those who were raised from the dead, who were seen, not only when they were healed or raised, but for a long time afterwards; not only whilst he dwelled upon this earth, but also after his departure; and for a good while after it, insomuch that some of them have reached our times.” *

Paley adds not another word on this important testimony. It is only by referring to the authority which he affects to quote (which is evidently so much more pains than he ever took himself) that we learn that this famous *Quadratus* was, even to Eusebius himself, a mere *hearsay* evidence,—“Among those who were then famous,” he tells us, “was *Quadratus*, whom *they say*,† together with the daughters of Philip, was endued with the gift of prophesying; and many others also at the same time flourished, who obtaining the first step of apostolical succession, and preaching and sowing the celestial seed of the kingdom of heaven throughout the world, filled the barns of God with increase.”‡—“His book,” says Eusebius, “is as yet extant among the Christian brethren, and a copy thereof remaineth with us, wherein appear perspicuous notes of the understanding and true apostolic doctrine of this man. That he was one of the ancients,§ may be gathered from his own words.” Then follows the famous passage which we have given.

Quadratus, according to such an account of the matter as we may gather from the Ecclesiastical History (or rather ecclesiastical romance, for such it is) of Eusebius, was fourth bishop of Athens, reckoning St. Paul the first, Dionysius the Areopagite the second, and Publius, his immediate predecessor, who as well as himself is said to have suffered martyrdom, the third.

From a letter of Dionysius bishop of Corinth to the Athenians, it is indicated that the Athenians had not only embraced the faith previous to the martyrdom of the predecessor of *Quadratus*, but that “they were now in a

* The whole passage from beginning to end is—Κοδατος, κ. τ. λ. ιστορει ταυτα ιδιαις φωναις—“τε δε σωτηρος ημων τα ιργα αι παρην, αληθη γαρ ην. Οι θεραπευθεντες, οι ανασταντες εκ νεκρων, οι ουκ αφθησαν μονον θεραπευομενοι και ανισταμενοι, αλλα και αι παροντες. Ουδε επιδημντος μονον τε σωτηρος, αλλα και απαλλαγεντος, ησαν επι χρονον ικανον ωστε και εις τους ημετερους χρονους τινες αυτων αφικοντο.”—Τοιουτος μεν αυτος, κ. τ. λ.

† Λογος εχει—“as the story goes,” “the tale has it.”—Euseb. Eccles. Hist. lib. iii. c. 81. E. linea 8, Ed. 1612.

‡ Ibid, lib. iii. c. 8. linea 11.

§ Καθ' αυτον αρχαιοτητα.

manner fallen from it, and were by the zealous labours of Quadratus reclaimed." *

But what if it should turn out that this Quadratus was no Christian at all ! That he was a Pagan priest, who officiated in the temple of *God the Saviour Æsculapius*, then established at Athens, and that this pretended testimony to the Jew-Jesus, is nothing more than a broken paragraph out of some account that a *heathen bishop* had given of the miracles that were wrought by the son of Coromis. Let the reader return to our article *Æsculapius*, and propose to his own conviction, and solve as he may the important queries thence emergent :

1st. If such an apology as this purports to be, had been written to the emperor Adrian, and Eusebius had possessed or seen a copy of it, why he should not have given us the *whole* of it, or at least enough to have given it distinctiveness of application and sense, so as to put beyond all doubt those three grand primaries of every written document—who it was that wrote—to whom it was that it was written,—and what was the subject of the writing ?

Of these inquiries, the broken sentence which Eusebius has given us, affords no solution. It might have been written by any body else as well as Quadratus—to any body else as well as to Adrian ; and of and concerning *Æsculapius*, as well, yea better and more probably, than concerning any other figment whatever.

No mind that hath the faculty of critical comparison, can shut from their influence on its conclusion these eighteen predications of the case :

1. That Eusebius was a Christian-evidence manufacturer, and was labouring and *digging* in any way, or on any ground, to find or to *make* a testimony to primitive Christianity.

2. That he lived and wrote in the age of *pious frauds*, when it was considered as the most meritorious exploit to turn the arms and defences of Paganism against itself, to pervert documents from their known sense, and to support the cause of Christianity, not only by forging writings, but by *supposing* persons who never existed.

3. That Eusebius himself indirectly confesses that he has acted on this principle, "that he has related whatever might redound to the glory, and that he has suppressed

* Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. iv. c. 22.

all that could tend to the disgrace of religion."* And that "if we subtract falsifications, interpolations and evident improbabilities, his account of the Christians during the first century, amounts to little more than we read in that undateable compilation, the New Testament."†

4. That we have no indication whatever, either in the New Testament, or in any credible history, that Christianity had been so successfully preached at Athens, as to gain an establishment; or that that city had become the see of a Christian bishop, at any time within the three first centuries.

5. That where Paul himself, with all his *gift of tongues* and power of working miracles, was only regarded as a babbler, and derided as a poor insane vagabond, it outrages the faculty of conceit itself, to conceive, that he could have appointed and left the regular succession of an ecclesiastical hierarchy.

6. That we have the most unquestionable and unquestioned evidence, that *Æsculapius* was worshipped all along in Athens, under the express title and designation of OUR SAVIOUR.

7. That the miracles subsequently ascribed to Jesus Christ, had been previously ascribed to, and believed to have been wrought by *Æsculapius*.

8. That these miracles, as ascribed to *Æsculapius*, answer in every particular to those referred to in this passage of Quadratus.

9. That, as ascribed to *Æsculapius*, these miracles of healing, and raising men *from the dead* (I pray observe, not raising the dead, but raising them from sicknesses of which they otherwise would have died, and so preventing their being numbered with the dead) were *characteristic* of this deity, and come within measure of probability—not of their having happened,—but of their having been believed to have happened.

10. That that character of openness, publicity and notoriety, which Quadratus here challenges as peculiarly characteristic of the works of *Our Saviour Æsculapius*, was as peculiarly wanting and deficient, nay, and even renoun-

* My Greek text of Eusebius, which is 216 years old, is deficient here, and obliges me to rely on the quotation as given by Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, vol. ii. c. 16. p. 490. Hear also that man after God's own heart, St. Chrysostom: "Great is the force of deceit! provided it be not excited by a treacherous intention."—*Com. on 1 Corinth. ix. 19.*

† My learned friend's unpublished Ed. of Plutarch, in *Appendice Primo*, 11.

ced and given up, as the very reverse of the character of the miracles ascribed to *Our Saviour Jesus Christ*.

11. That tablets were hung up in the temple of *Æsculapius*, and all its walls and pillars covered over and emblazoned with trophies of his victories over disease and death.

12. That persons who had been healed and raised *from the dead* (that is, recovered from diseases of which they had like to have died,) were every day in attendance in his temple, certifying the reality of the miracles which they sincerely believed had been wrought upon them, and pouring forth in fervours of ecstatic devotion their grateful acknowledgments to the god who had heard their prayers, and magnified his power in their miraculous recoveries:—but

13. That the works of Jesus Christ, were expressly said to have been done in secret, and concealed as much as possible from human observance. His own resurrection is admitted by writers on the Christian evidence, to have been only *a private miracle*.* A character of legerdemain and collusion attaches to his most wonderful performances, even on the showing of the New Testament itself. When he was *transfigured*† he takes with him only his three favourites.—When he turns water into wine, he chooses the time when the witnesses were so drunk as not to know the difference.—When he raises Jairus's daughter, he puts away all her friends from witnessing the reanimating process.—When he cures the blind man, he takes him aside from public observance.—When he cleanses the leper, he “*straitly charged him, See thou say nothing to any man, but show thyself to the priest;*”‡ and expressly avows his aim and intention to have been to *bilk* and *deceive* the people.§

14. These were the works, and the characteristics of the works of the Christian Saviour, in diametrical opposition to which, the bishop of *Æsculapius* would with singular propriety, say, “But the works of *our Saviour* were always conspicuous, for *they* were real,” &c. as it follows: and as it might have followed, or gone before—The works of *their Saviour* were secret and clandestine, because they were *not* real, nor have Christians so much as one public trophy to show, or one individual in the whole world whom they can bring forward to attest any sort of benefit or ad-

* See Ignatius's Testimony—Belsham's Evidences.

† *Metamorphosed* is the real original word.

‡ Mark, i. 44.

§ Mark, iv. 12.

vantage received from their Saviour to the mind, body or estate of any man, except in the way of supplying a new pretext for levying contributions on the folly, weakness, and ignorance of mankind. And

15. That whereas not more than a twentieth part of the Roman empire had embraced the Christian religion, previous to the conversion of that (as Eusebius calls him) *most holy emperor* Constantine: the worship of the god *Æsculapius* continued in the heart of the empire under an unbroken succession of *Pagan* bishops, with scarcely diminished splendour for several hundred years after the pretended diffusion of the New Light.

16. That notwithstanding Constantine's destruction of the Phœnician temples, that at Athens still remained.

17. We have better evidence than any that hath yet been pretended for Christianity, of the belief of a miraculous cure wrought by this deity, as late as the year A. D. 485, which is thirty-five years on this side the middle of the fifth century.

18. Nor, whatever Protestants may choose to think and say of the palpable Paganism of Popery, ought they to be suffered to blink the historical fact that the religion of Constantine was of the very grossest type and form of all that was ever popish.* So that they who choose to deny that Christianity and Popery are one and the same religion, must make their best bargain of the consequence that follows on their denial—even that Christianity kept floundering about, and found no settlement in the world for whose benefit it was intended, till it was taken up and established by our English Constantine, Henry the Eighth.

THE CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS, or those who are said to have addressed apologies to the Roman Emperors, or Senate, in vindication of Christianity and of Christians, were in order of time—

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Quadratus, Bishop of Athens | A. D. 119 |
| 2. Aristides, an Athenian Philosopher | 121 |
| 3. Justin Martyr | 140 |

* See his desire to have Mass and prayers for his soul after death, cap. 71. And “how he commanded that his picture should not be set in idolatrous temples,” that honour being reserved for Christian churches—16. “How he commanded that the heathenish military legions should pray on the Lord's day.”—19. And his piety and faith in the Sign of the Cross—2. And how the Scythians were subjected and overcome by the Sign of the Cross.—Ch. 5. B. 4.

4. Melito	A. D. 141
5. Athenagoras	178
6. Tertullian	200
7. Minucius Felix,	210
8. Arnobius	306

The difference of time between these Christian advocates, precludes us from taking any view of their writings distinctively from their occurrence in the regular succession of Christian Fathers. Of the two first no remains are extant.

ARISTIDES, A. D. 121.

An Athenian Philosopher and Christian Apologist, of whom Eusebius informs us, that “he was a faithful man, zealous for our religion, and like Quadratus, wrote an Apology for it to Adrian, which,” he adds, “is still preserved among many.”* We have, however, not a word of this; nor should we, perhaps, have found such a name as that of *Aristides* among the faithful, if the heathens had not had their *Aristides the Just*, whose name was wanted for the martyrology.

HEGESIPPUS, A. D. 130.

Is placed by Dr. Lardner forty-three years later, lived under Adrian, and wrote on the siege of Jerusalem, comprising the ecclesiastical history from the Apostles down to his own time. Though Eusebius represents him as having lived in the time of the Apostles themselves, or as immediately succeeding them, and having written five books of *Memoirs of the Apostles*, from the fifth of which he gives us a long extract concerning the martyrdom of the apostle James, the immediate brother of Christ, whom Hegesippus thus describes†—“This man was holy from his mother’s womb; he drank neither wine nor strong drink; neither ate any creature wherein there was life. He was neither shaven nor anointed, nor ever used a bath. To him alone was it lawful to enter into the holy places. He used no woollen garments, but wore only fine linen, and he went alone into the temple. He was found on his knees, suppli-

* Eccl. Hist. lib. iv. c. 3. vol. iv.

† Ο' Ηγησιππος ἐπὶ τῆς πρώτης πῶν ἀποστόλων γενομένης διαδοχῆς—ἐν τῷ περὶ αὐτοῦ ὑπομνήματι ἱστορεῖ τὸν τρόπον—κ. τ. λ. aliter, ο' Ιωσήπος.—Eccl. Hist. lib. ii. p. 66, c. 22.—B.

cating for the remission of the sins of the people ; so that his knees were overgrown with a callosity like those of a camel ; from his continual kneeling in prayer to God, and supplication for the people ; and from the excess of his righteousness he was surnamed The Just, and Oblias, which signifies in Greek *the bulwark of the people, and righteousness.*” *

I held this passage worthy of preservation, as furnishing an additional proof that the first of that order of eccentric and fanatical creatures whose successors afterwards came to be called Christians, were really Egyptian monks, as Eusebius has in positive terms acknowledged them to be, the regular descendants and disciples of the philosophy of Pythagoras.

None of the genuine works of this Hegesippus are extant ; his name, however, and the number and the subjects of the volumes ascribed to him being given, there were *data* enow for Christian piety to fall to work upon :

“There is a counterfeit volume of five books under his name, the translator whereof they say St. Ambrose was ; nay, it is likelier that St. Ambrose himself was the author.”

So says the Ecclesiastical Chronography, affixed to the oldest editions of Eusebius. With Dr. Lardner, however, St. Ambrose is an honourable man,—“so are they all—all honourable men !”

I can neither embrace nor entirely reject the inference that presents itself, from the fact of the title of Hegesippus’s five books—the *Memoirs of the Apostles*—being precisely the same as that under which Justin Martyr seems to quote the contents of our New Testament.

JUSTIN MARTYR, A. D. 140.

Is so called from his being believed to have suffered martyrdom,—a distinction which entirely harmonizes with the admissions of Dionysius, Origen, Tertullian, and Melito, that the numbers of martyrs was really very few, and that consequently martyrdom was no common occurrence to the professors of Christianity. He was born at Flavia Neapolis, anciently called Sichem, a city of Samaria in Pa-

* Οἶνον καὶ σικερα οὐκ ἐπιεν οὐδὲ ἐμψυχὸν ἐφαγε ζυρὸν ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν οὐκ ἀνέβη. Ἐλαιὸν οὐκ ἠλείψατο καὶ βαλακίω οὐκ ἐχρησάτο—κατα. τ. λ.

Ὡς ἀπισκλήκεναι τὰ γόνατα αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν καμῆλον διὰ τὸ αἰεὶ καμπτεῖν ἐπὶ γόνυ—
κ. τ. λ. *Hegesippus apud Eusebium.*

lestine; a circumstance which fully accounts for the Jewish turn and character which any system of philosophy that had percolated his brain, would necessarily imbibe. Dr. Lardner describes him as being early a lover of truth, and informs us that he studied philosophy under several masters, first under a Stoic, next under a Peripatetic, then under a Pythagorean, and lastly, under a Platonic philosopher, whose principles and sentiments he preferred above all others, until he became acquainted with the Christian Religion, which he then embraced as the only safe and profitable *philosophy*.”*

Fabricius supposes that he was born A. D. 89, and suffered martyrdom in the 74th year of his age, which would be A. D. 163.

The testimony of Justin Martyr to the contents of the New Testament, for the sake of which he is adduced by Lardner, is rendered nugatory by the facts: 1st, of the existence of apocryphal gospels, which contained very much of the same contents, and in the same language, as those that have been since received into the canon of the New Testament: 2. That Matthew's and Luke's Gospels were mere compilations from previously existing documents, from which Justin might have made his extracts as well, or rather than from the compilations of our Evangelists: 3. That he has never mentioned the names of our Evangelists, but speaks of his authorities generally as *Commentaries*, or *Memoirs of the Apostles*: 4. And that he has also quoted passages from those Gospels which the Church has rejected, with indications of his entertaining as high respect for them as for those it has received.

The principal works of Justin Martyr are his two Apologies, and his Dialogue with Trypho, the Jew, in two parts; the latter of which is generally quoted by such writers as Porteus, Doddridge, and Addison, in those contemptible and truly wicked treatises on the Evidences of the Christian Religion, which are written for the purpose of being imposed on workhouse children, parish apprentices, and candidates for confirmation, to make them believe in the miraculous propagation of the Gospel.

This is the popular quotation from it:—“There exists not a people, whether Greeks or barbarians, or any other race of men, by whatever appellation or manners they

* *Ταυτην μονην ευρισκον φιλοσοφιαν ασφαλη τε και συμφερων.* I found this alone the safe and profitable philosophy, are his words. Surely, that word *philosophy* is an infinitely suspicious term for Christianity!

may be distinguished, however ignorant of arts or agriculture,—whether they dwell under tents, or wander about in covered waggon, —among whom prayers are not offered up, in the name of a crucified Jesus, to the Father and Creator of all things.” One’s wonder that so early a Christian should have committed himself in so monstrous an absurdity, utterly destructive as it is of all the stories of martyrdom which give such pathetic effect to the tale of Christian Evidences, is only subdued by the truly paralyzing impudence of those who would, in our own day, still attempt to impose it on Christian congregations.

The character and genius of Justin’s Apologies for Christianity will be best appreciated from so much of the text itself as I subjoin.

*Justin Martyr’s Apology, addressed in the Year 141.
A Specimen.*

“Unto the Autocrat Titus Ælius Adrianus; unto Antoninus Pius, most noble Cæsar and true Philosopher; unto Lucius, son of the philosopher Cæsar, and adopted of Pius, favourers of learning: and unto the sacred Senate, with all the people of Rome; on the behalf of those persons who, among all sorts of men, are unjustly hated and reproached: I, JUSTIN, the son of Priscus Bacchius of Flavia Neapolis, of Palestine in Syria, as one of their number, do, suppliant with earnest prayers, present this my petition”—(*omissis omittendis*).—“You hold not the scales of Justice even; for, instigated by headstrong passions, and driven on also by the invisible whips of evil demons, you take great care that we shall suffer though you care not for what.*

“For verily I must tell you that heretofore those impure spirits under various apparitions went into the daughters of men, and defiled boys, and dressed up such scenes of horror, that such as entered not into the reason of things, but judged by appearance only, stood aghast at the spectres; and being shrunk up with fear and amazement, and never imagining them to be devils, called them gods, and invoked them by such titles as each devil was pleased to nickname himself by.†

* Is this language that could have been addressed to those models of justice and just government, Adrian and Antoninus? Would the like of it have been endured by any Christian Sovereign? Has it so much as an appearance of plausibility?

† Reeves’s Apologies, p. 10.

“If then we hold some opinions near of kin to the poets and philosophers in greatest repute among you, why are we thus unjustly hated? For, in saying that all things were made in this beautiful order by God, what do we seem to say more than Plato? When we teach a general conflagration, what do we teach more than the Stoics? By opposing the worship of the works of men’s hands, we concur with Menander the comedian; and by declaring the Logos the first-begotten of God, our Master Jesus Christ, to be born of a Virgin without any human mixture, and to be crucified and dead, and to have risen again, and ascended into heaven, we say no more in this, than what you say of those whom you style the Sons of Jove.

“For you need not be told what a parcel of sons the writers most in vogue among you assign to Jove. There’s Mercury, Jove’s interpreter, in imitation of the Logos,* in worship among you. There’s Æsculapius, the physician, smitten by a bolt of thunder, and after that ascending into heaven. There’s Bacchus torn to pieces, and Hercules burnt to get rid of his pains. There’s Pollux and Castor, the sons of Jove by Leda, and Perseus by Danae. Not to mention others, I would fain know why you always deify the departed Emperors, and have a fellow at hand to make affidavit that he saw Cæsar mount to heaven from the funeral pile.† As to the son of God, called Jesus, should we allow him to be nothing more than man, yet the title of the *Son of God* is very justifiable upon the account of his wisdom, considering you have your Mercury in worship, under the title of the Word and Messenger of God.

“As to the objection of our Jesus’s being crucified, I say, that suffering was common to all the forementioned sons of Jove, but only they suffered another kind of death. As to his being born of a virgin, you have your Perseus to balance that. As to his curing the lame, and the paralytic, and such as were cripples from their birth, this is little more than what you say of your Æsculapius.‡

“But if the Christian profession must still meet with

* This Mercury had, however, held his title of the *Logos* many ages before it was challenged for the Christian Mercury.—See chapter 26.

† In the case of *Romulus*, one *Julius Proculus*, a man of exemplary virtues, took a solemn oath that Romulus, himself appeared to him, and ordered him to inform the Senate of his being called up to the assembly of the gods, under the name of *Quirinus*.—*Plutarch*, and *Dionysius Halicar.* lib. 2, p. 124.

‡ See *Æsculapius* and Jesus Christ compared, chap. 20.

such bitter treatment, remember what I told you before, that the farthest you can go is to take away our lives,* but the loss of this life will certainly be no ill bargain to us; but you indeed, and all such wicked enemies without repentance, shall one day dearly pay for this persecution in fire everlasting.† And as far as these things shall appear agreeable to truth, so far we would desire you to respect 'em accordingly: but if they seem trifling, despise them as trifles: however, don't proceed against the professors of them, who are people of the most inoffensive lives, as severely as against your professed enemies. For tell you I must, that if you persist in this course of iniquity, you shall not escape the vengeance of God in the other world."‡

The reader has here a fair specimen of the whole composition, and a complete view of the state and character of the most primitive Christianity.

It will be seen from the fickleness of Justin's character, and the infinitely suspicious style of his Apology (which it is impossible to believe was ever presented at all,) that it is in the highest degree doubtful whether he was really a Christian, or any thing more than an Ammonian philosopher; that is, one of the sect of *Ammonius Saccas*, who in the second century maintained, that all religions were equally founded in the delirium of crazy brains, and in the craft of shrewd ones; and that there was no such difference between Paganism and Christianity, but that they might very well be incorporated and considered as one and the same, equally proper to be solemnly taught, and had in respect by the common people, and laughed at in secret by the wise. §

The story of his martyrdom has no other plausibility of history than a brief notice of a lewd quarrel with a cynical philosopher, Crescens, who was provoked to knock him on the head for bringing a charge which we have had Christian bishops who would have felt more disposed to forgive than to resent. ||

The attempt to represent Justin as a martyr, strongly

* A reluctant admission that no lives *had* been taken away.

† P. 76, ch. 40.

‡ P. 90.

§ The celebrated Origen had, in his early days, been a disciple of the all-accommodating Ammonius.—*Lardner*, vol. 1. p. 520.

|| *Κρισχης γουν ο εννοτευσας τη μεγαλη πολει παιδεραστια μεν παντας υπεση-
συχε.* Crescens himself gave the fittest translation of this passage.—*Euseb. Eccl.
Hist.* lib. 4, c. 15. B.

illustrates the general character of Christian martyrdom. Those who suffered by the most just and impartial administration of the laws, as robbers or murderers, or who brought on themselves the consequences of the provocations they had given, so they made a profession of Christianity, never failed to acquire the posthumous renown of martyrdom. All Christian thieves were sure to pass for saints; and even our Henry VIII. and Queen Mary have been represented as the victims of persecution, suffering under the obstinacy of their heretical subjects.

MELITO, A. D. 141.

Bishop of Sardis.

Melito, supposed by some of the moderns to be the same as the *Angel of the Church of Sardis*, whom Christ is represented in the Revelation of St. John, as ordering that Apostle to address in the Epistle *there* dictated, was Bishop of Sardis in Lydia. In the very ancient Chronography affixed to the oldest English editions of Eusebius, and which, upon the whole I find easiest to be conciliated to some sort of consistency with circumstances, he is called Meliton, and placed next to Justin, at A. D. 141, which is sixty-four years earlier than his place in Lardner. He dedicated an Apology to Marcus Antoninus in behalf of the Christian community, then under suffering, which Eusebius, in his Chronicle, places at the year 170. As Marcus Antoninus began his reign March 7, A. D. 161, this Apology at least cannot be dated earlier than that time; and taking it, upon the most laborious investigation, to be one of the most genuine and authentic documents, of so high antiquity, that antiquity could ever supply: it may be well esteemed to be matter of *real and substantial evidence*. Making the due allowance for the barbarity of the times, and hoping, as we may, that it was the cruelty of others, and not his own fanaticism, that made him *an eunuch*, one cannot enough admire the elegant simplicity and plain and rational statement of the probable, and therefore convincing, facts that rest on the authority of his most unexceptionable statement. Eusebius has preserved a large fragment of this important document, from which Dr. Lardner liberally renders for us the annexed paragraph, which he says is remarkable for politeness, as well as upon other accounts:

“Pious men,” says he, “are *now* persecuted and ha-

passed throughout all Asia by new decrees, WHICH WAS NEVER DONE BEFORE ;* and impudent sycophants, and such as covet the possessions of others, taking occasion from the edicts, rob without fear or shame, and cease not to plunder those who have offended in nothing. If these things are done by your order, let them be thought to be well done—for it is not reasonable to believe that a just emperor should ever decree what is unjust—and we shall cheerfully bear the reward of such a death. But if this resolution and new edict, which is not fit to be enacted against barbarians and enemies, proceeds not from you, much more would we entreat you not to neglect and give us up to this public rapine.”

But perhaps it was not, in Dr. Lardner's view, conducive to the interests of piety and religion, to have continued his quotation into the very next paragraph of this document. For the importance of the truth with which it teems, this single passage outweighs the value of a thousand volumes of factitious evidences. Other testimonies only serve to thicken the darkness, and to remove the truth we seek still further and further from the reach of our research ; this leads us directly to it, and with so much the happier effect, as it appears to have been no part of our guide's design to have done so. The sincerity and devotion of this Father's mind to the Christian cause, renders a testimony like his such as Christians themselves must respect. The adverse bearing of the testimony of a friendly party, like the favourable bearing of the admissions of an enemy, is universally considered to constitute the most satisfactory sort of historical certainty. I hold the preservation of this important passage, and bringing it forth into the prominence it challenges, worth a place in my text itself, and the more so, as I feel assured that there is no writer on the Christian evidences whatever who has hitherto quoted the passage, or who, if he had possessed diligence of research enough to have found it, would not have taken pains to bury it again. This it is :

Ἡ γὰρ καθ' ἡμᾶς φιλοσοφία, προτίρον μὲν ἐν βαρβαροῖς ἠχμασεν. Ἐπανθῆσασα δὲ τοῖς σοῖς ἐθνεσὶ κατὰ τὴν αὐγεύστου τοῦ σου προγοῦρου μεγάλῃ ἀρχῇ, ἐγεννήθη μάλιστα τῇ σὴ βασιλείᾳ αἰσίον αγαθόν.

“For the philosophy which we profess, truly flourished aforetime among the barbarous nations ; but having blossomed again (or been transplanted) in the great reign of

* Τὸ γὰρ οὐδε πώποτε γενομένον.

thy ancestor Augustus, it proved to be above all things ominous of good fortune to thy kingdom."

The passage continues:—"For from thenceforth the Roman empire increased in glory, whose inheritor now you are, greatly beloved indeed by all your subjects: both you and your son will be continually prayed for. Retain, therefore, this religion, which grew as your empire grew; which began with Augustus, which was revered by your ancestors before all other religions. Only Nero and Domitian, through the persuasion of certain envious and malicious persons, were disposed to bring our doctrine into hatred. But your godly ancestors corrected their blind ignorance, and rebuked oftentimes by their epistles the rash enterprises of those who were ill affected towards us. And your own father wrote unto the municipal authorities in our behalf, that they should make no innovations, nor practice anything prejudicial to the Christians. And of yourself, we are fully persuaded that we shall obtain the object of our humble petition, in that your opinion and sentence is correspondent unto that of your predecessors, yea, and even more gracious, and far more religious."

This document—and it is wholly indisputable—is absolutely fatal to all the pretended historical evidences of Christianity, inasmuch as it demonstrates the facts—

1st. That it is not true that Christians, as such, had ever at any time been the objects of any extensive or notorious political persecution.

2nd. That it is not true that Christianity had any such origin as has been generally imagined for it.

3rd. That it is not true that it made its first appearance at the time generally assigned; for, *προτερον ημασιν*, it had flourished before that time.

4th. That it is not true that it originated in Judea, which was a province of the Roman empire; for it was an importation from some foreign countries which lay beyond the boundaries of that empire.

It is enough to arrange in their places the minor names of Apollinaris, Dionysius of Corinth, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Miltiades, Serapion, and whoever else there may have been in the space of time from Melito, whose testimony is so essential, till we come to these distinguished luminaries of the church, and pillars of the faith, with whom it is absolutely necessary to be acquainted. The rest are but as sparks on tinder.

ST. IRENÆUS, A. D. 192.

Bishop of Lyons.

Learned men are not agreed about the time of Irenæus, or of his principal work against heresies. He was bishop of Lyons in Gaul. One cannot reasonably fix him at so early a date as is sometimes claimed for him (as having been the disciple of Polycarp, who was the disciple of St. John), on account of the later date of the heresies and corruptions of Christianity, against which he has written, and which must of course have had time to have spread, and to have become very serious evils, before they could have called for the composition of so learned and laborious a work intended to expose and refute them. It would be incompatible with that argumentative generosity which I have proposed to myself as the principle of this *DIEGESIS*, to take up as a proposition the earliest date that the learned would grant me for this Father, for the sake of pouncing on the fatal corollary that must follow; *i. e.* if so early wrote Irenæus, so much earlier still must those heretical forms of Christianity have obtained in the world, which Irenæus wrote to refute; *they*, then, were not derived from Christianity, but Christianity was derived *from them*; *they* are not corruptions and depravations from an original stock of primitive orthodoxy, but they are themselves the primitive type, and orthodoxy is either a corruption or an improvement upon them. Like all the rest of the noble army, Irenæus contrived to carry off the crown of martyrdom; but as, at any rate, the blood-thirsty Pagans suffered him to enjoy his bishopric in peace till he was ninety-three years old, he had not much to complain of, in their expediting so slow a progress to glory.

He is honoured by Dr. Lardner with the epithet, "*this excellent person*;" and is called by Photius the *divine* Irenæus. The best account of him which the English reader can expect to find, is in Middleton's *Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, &c.* in which he is neither spared nor flattered. The best apology for him is one of the oldest in being, and which we have continual occasion to remember in reading the works of Christian divines, "Remember that the Holy Ghost saith, *Omnis homo mendax*." We must not wonder, then, that Irenæus should have been in the habit of asserting as true, not only what he himself knew to be false, but, in the plenitude of that security of

not being contradicted, and of being able to cloak himself up in the sanctity of affected contempt for all who were more honest and better informed (on which all other churchmen as well as he place their ultimate reliance), that he should put forth as truth what he knew was impossible to be so, and what every sensible man in the world must have known so too; that he should audaciously misread inscriptions on public monuments, and pretend authorities for the proof of the Christian religion, even in the teeth of thousands who both knew and saw that there was nothing of the sort in existence.

Thus he pretended that there was a monument or image between two bridges on the river Tyber at Rome, bearing an inscription to *Simon the holy God*,* which the Devil had caused to be erected there to the honour of Simon Magus, whom they were to be persuaded by that sort of proof that their ancestors had worshipped; thence to infer a coincidence with the apostolic history.

Amid innumerable ridiculous stories, he tells us† that John, who leaned on the breast of our Saviour, was a priest, a martyr, and a doctor of divinity, and wore a petalon (some part of the Popish trumpery), which, on such authority as this, was to claim the sanction of apostolic institution. The distinctness and solemnity of his assurance that miracles were still in full vogue in the church in his days; that “they still possessed the power of raising the dead, as the Lord and his apostles did, through prayer; and that oftentimes the whole church of some certain place, by reason of some urgent cause, with fasting and *chaste* prayer hath brought to pass that the departed spirit of the dead hath returned to the corpse, and the man was, by the earnest prayers of the saints, restored to life again.” Such a man never expected that rational beings would believe him: no good cause would thank him for his advocacy.

However early Irenæus be placed in the order of Christian Fathers (Dodwell supposed that he was born as early as the year 97, and Dr. Lardner places him at A. D. 178, and distinguishes him as a *saint*), so early prevailed many of the grossest absurdities and superstitions which Protestants are wont to consider as *peculiarly* characteristic of the church of Rome.

* Euseb. lib. 2, c. 34.

† Ibid. lib. 3, c. 28.

PANTÆNUS, A. D. 193.

PANTÆNUS has claim on our acquaintance as master of Clemens Alexandrinus and Origen, and head of the *university* or school of Alexandria, in Egypt; though, on the best calculations, it would seem that he was living even in the third century. His high authority is indicated in the circumstance of Origen's pleading *his* example in justification of his study of heathen learning. Photius speaks of him as a hearer of some who had seen the apostles, and even of some of the apostles themselves.

Eusebius bears this important testimony to his character and place in history:* “At that time (*scil.* about the period of the accession of Commodus) there presided in the school of the faithful at that place (*scil.* Alexandria) a man highly celebrated on account of his learning, by name *Pantænus*. For there had been from ancient time erected among them a school of sacred learning, which remains to this day; and we have understood that it has been wont to be furnished with men eminent for their eloquence and the study of divine things; and it is said that this person excelled others of that time, having been brought up in the *Stoic* philosophy; that he was nominated or sent forth as a missionary to preach the gospel of Christ to the nations of the *East*, and to have travelled into *India*. For there were yet at that time many evangelists of the word, animated with a divine zeal of imitating the apostles, by contributing to the enlargement of the gospel, and building up the church: of whom this Pantænus was one; who is said to have gone to the *Indians*, where it is commonly said he found the gospel of Matthew, written in the Hebrew tongue, which before his arrival had been delivered to some in that country who had the knowledge of Christ, to whom Bartholomew, one of the apostles, is said to have preached, and to have left with them that writing of Matthew, and that it was preserved among them to that time. This Pantænus, therefore, for his many excellent performances, was at last made president of the school of Alexandria, where he set forth the treasures of the divine principles both by word of mouth and by his writings.”†

What St. Jerom says of this ancient Christian, is to this purpose: “Pantænus, a philosopher of the *Stoic* sect, according to an ancient custom of the city of Alexandria, was, at the request of ambassadors from *India*, sent into

* I find this passage ready translated for me by Lardner, vol. 1, p. 390.

† Eccles. Hist. lib. 5, c. 9.

that country by Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria, where he found that Bartholomew, one of the twelve apostles, had preached the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the gospel of Matthew, which he brought back with him to Alexandria, written in Hebrew letters.”*

Here have we another clue to the real history of Christianity, winding up to the same core of the labyrinth, and bringing us through a varied tract to the result which we have already ascertained, under the guidance of Melito, Eusebius, and Philo. Pantænus, a missionary from the Therapeutan college of Alexandria, seems to have brought from India the idolatrous legends of the Hindoo god Chrishna, whom he imported into the Roman dominions, like a good Eclectic as he was, uniting the characters of the Grecian, or Phœnician Jesus, and the Indian CHRISHNA, “in one Lord Jesus Christ,” whose history, at first contained in THE DIEGESIS, or general narrative, was re-edited by three Egyptian secretaries, afterwards yclept the evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and subsequently enlarged by an appendix of Egyptian rhapsodies, under the denomination of the Gospel according to St. John. The discovery of the unknown term in a quadratic equation, never more entirely responded to all the requisites of the problem, than these facts do to every rational query that can arise out of the phenomena of the gospel legend.

CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, A. D. 194.

Or, as he is entitled by Dr. Lardner, St. Clement of Alexandria, was, as Eusebius intimates, originally a heathen, though he succeeded Pantænus as president of the monkish university of Alexandria, which mankind have to thank for the concoction or getting up the whole gospel scheme, as originally imported from *India*, and modified to the taste of the nations which acknowledged the supremacy of Rome. Mr. Dodwell was of opinion that all the works of Clement which are remaining were written between the years 193 and the end of 195. His works are very extensive, his authority very high in the church, and his name and place in history chiefly to be remembered on account of the frequent quotation of his *Stromata*, or fragments, and other pieces. In point of evidence he affords nothing, except that from the circumstance of the four gospels having received the more particular countenance of the Alexan-

* St. Jerom quoted by Lardner, vol. 1, p. 391.

drine college, over which he presided, he and all other aspirants to university honours, and the ecclesiastical emoluments that would follow them, must be expected to pay all due deference to the books his university had chosen to patronize.

TERTULLIAN, A. D. 200.

Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus, the last that can be read into the second century, and the very first of all the Latin Fathers, was, like the rest of them, originally a heathen, was afterwards a most zealous and orthodox Christian, and finally fell into heresy. He was made presbyter of the church of Carthage in Africa, of which he was a native, about A. D. 193, and died, as may be conjectured, about the year 220. As he had become tinctured with heresy, he lost the honour of his place in "*the noble army of martyrs.*"

The character of his style, as given by Lactantius, may be allowed by all.—"It is rugged, unpolished, and very obscure;" and yet, as Cave observes, it is lofty and masculine, and carries a kind of majestic eloquence with it, that gives a pleasant relish to the judicious and inquisitive reader. "There appears," says Lardner, in his writings frequent tokens of true unaffected humility and modesty—virtues in which the primitive Christians were generally so very eminent."

Of this assertion of Dr. Lardner, and, consequently, of the character of assertions likely to be made by the Doctor generally, where the honour of Christianity and of Christians was to be maintained, I leave the reader to judge from the annexed

Specimen of St. Tertullian's true unaffected humility and modesty, in his discourse against the sin of going to the Theatre.

"You are fond of spectacles: expect the greatest of all spectacles—the last and eternal judgment of the universe! How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many proud monarchs and fancied gods groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness; so many magistrates, who persecuted the name of the Lord, liquefying in fiercer fires than they ever kindled against the Christians; so many sage philosophers blushing in red-hot flames, with their deluded scholars; so many celebrated poets trembling before the tribunal, not of Minos, but of Christ; so

many tragedians, more tuneful in the expression of their own sufferings; so many dancers,"* &c.—I hope the reader may think here is humility and modesty enough!

Specimen of Tertullian's manner of reasoning on the evidences of Christianity.†

"I find no other means to prove myself to be impudent with success, and happily a fool, than by my contempt of shame; as, for instance,—I maintain that the Son of God was born: why am I not ashamed of maintaining such a thing? Why! but because it is itself a shameful thing.—I maintain that the Son of God died: well, *that* is wholly credible because it is monstrously absurd.—I maintain that after having been buried, he rose again: and *that* I take to be absolutely true, because it was manifestly impossible."‡

This language, not being protected by privilege of inspiration, is allowed to convey its full drift of absurdity to our awakened intelligence. It is safest to go to sleep and give God the glory, over the perfectly parallel rhapsodies of the inspired chief of sinners.

Where Tertullian is intelligible, his testimony to the *status rerum* of Christianity up to his time, is highly important. And 'tis from his Apology addressed to the Emperor and the Roman Senate in the year 198, which Dr. Lardner justly calls his master-piece, that we collect a testimony corroborative of that of Melito, of Origen himself, and of the highest degree of conjectural probability, in demonstration of the utter falsehood and romance of the whole proposition on which Paley rests the stress of his Evidences of Christianity. So far is it from truth,

* *Supersunt alia spectacula, ille ultimus et perpetuus judicii dies, ille nationibus insperatus ille derisus, cum tanta seculi vetustas et tot ejus natiuitates uno igne haurientur. Quæ tunc spectaculi latitudo? quid admirer! quid rideam! ubi gaudeam, ubi exultem, spectans tot et tantos reges, qui in cælum recepti nunciabantur, in imis tenebris congemiscentes? item præsides persecutores Dominici nominis, sævioribus quam ipsi flammis sævierunt liquescentes? Quid sapientes philosophos coram discipulis suis una conflagentibus erubescences, etiam Poetas, non Rhadamanti nec ad Minois sed ad inopinati Christi tribunal palpitantes, &c.—Ita citat locum Paganus Obtrectator, p. 150. Sufficiat lectori justo pro auctoritate.—R. T.*

† De Spectaculis, c. 30.

‡ So rendered and authenticated by the original text, quoted in my "Syntagma," p. 106, my first publication from this prison; a work which those whose scandalous impostures and audacious slanders provoked, find it wisest to treat with contempt. The Christian war is always Parthian. Its tact is to throw out its calumnies, but never to allow the accused his privilege of defence. To read the vituperations that Christians heap on infidels, is an exercise of godly piety: to venture but to look on an infidel's vindication, is playing with edged tools.—None rail so loud, as they who rail in safety!

that Christians were ever the victims of intolerance and persecution on the score of their profession of a pure and holy doctrine, that in addition to the testimony of the general sense and fairest scope of the greatest number of texts of Scripture itself,* the truly respectable suffrage of Melito bishop of Sardis, the express declaration of Origen,† that up to his time the number of martyrs was very considerable, and above all, to the irresistible conviction of all the rational probabilities of the case, we may now add

THE TESTIMONY OF TERTULLIAN‡

“ That the wisest of the Roman Emperors have been protectors of the Christians.

“ The Christian persecutors have been always men divested of justice, piety, and common shame, upon whose government you yourselves have put a brand, and rescinded their acts by restoring those whom they condemned. But of all the Emperors down to this present reign, who understood any thing of religion or humanity, name me one who ever persecuted the Christians. On the contrary, we show you the excellent M. Aurelius for our protector and patron, who though he could not publicly set aside the penal laws, yet he did as well, he publicly rendered them ineffectual in another way, by discouraging our accusers with the last punishments, viz. burning alive.

“ Does not the prison sweat with your heathen criminals continually?—Do not the mines continually groan with the load of heathens?—Are not your wild beasts fattened with heathens?—Now, among all these malefactors, there’s not a Christian to be found for any crime but that of his name only, or if there be, *we disown him for a Christian.*”§

Such language as we have seen Tertullian use, and such a spirit of annoyance and actual assault upon the rights

* 1 Timothy, iv. 8. Godliness is profitable, &c.—1 Peter, iii. 13. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?—v. 16, That they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation.—Matthew, v. That they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

† Quoted in Gibbon, chap. 15.

‡ Reeves’ Apologies of, &c.

§ This is an early specimen of primitive *Quakerism*, the policy of a sect of the most arrogant, most ignorant, fraudulent, intolerant, and inexorable men that ever adorned the gospel and disgraced humanity. In every thing the diametrical reverse of their professions. It may seem hard to say that there never was an honest man among them; but there never was a hard saying so like a true one.

and liberties of their Pagan fellow citizens, must occasionally have provoked the passions of any men who had no supernatural graces to subdue and coerce the sentiments of nature. The spitting in a magistrate's face—the interruption of Pagan worship, the total expulsion of their own children and brethren from all membership, relation, or succession of inheritance, in the families of which they were a part, upon their not conforming to the faith;* and all such sort of conduct as persons who desired martyrdom, and delighted in being ill used, would be likely to adopt, might be followed frequently by just, and sometimes by excessive retribution; but—"it is certain that we may appeal to the grateful confessions of the first Christians, that the greatest part of those magistrates who exercised in the provinces the authority of the Emperor or of the Senate, and to whose hands alone the jurisdiction of life and death was intrusted, behaved like men of polished manners and liberal education, who respected the rules of justice, and who were conversant with the precepts of philosophy.† In one word, the Pagan magistrates neither were, nor pretended to be, under the influence of supernatural motives, and there are no natural motives to incline any men to be cruel and inexorable.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE FATHERS OF THE THIRD CENTURY.

ORIGEN, A. D. 230.

It is only necessary to follow the isoteric or interior evidences of the Christian religion below the close of the second century, for the sake of bringing the reader acquainted with the two most distinguished persons that ever were concerned with it; Origen, its most distinguished priest, and Constantine, its most distinguished patron. Origen, was born in that great cradle and nursery of all superstition, Egypt, in the year 184 or 185—that is, the fifth or sixth of the Emperor Commodus, and died in the sixty-ninth or seventieth year of his age, A. D. 253. Though

* ——— *Quæque Ipse miserrima, vidi
Et quorum! Quis talia fando!*

† Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, chap. 15.

Eusebius flatly denies the assertion of Porphyry, that Origen had been originally a heathen,—and was afterwards converted to Christianity, yet Origen is proud to vindicate to himself his imitation of his predecessor, Pantænus, in the study of profane learning. He had studied under that celebrated philosopher, Ammonius Saccus, who, in the second century, had taught that “Christianity and Paganism when rightly understood, differed in no essential points, but had a common origin, and really were one and the same religion; nothing but the schismatical trickery of fanatical adventurers, who sought to bring over the trade and profits of spiritualizing into their own hands, having introduced a distinction where in reality there was no difference.”

This was unquestionably the orthodox doctrine of the second century, and it so entirely quadrates with all the historical phenomena, that one cannot but hold it honourable both to Origen’s head and heart, that he has owned his early proficiency in the *Ammonian philosophy*, under this, its illustrious master.

Leonides, the father of Origen, is said to have suffered martyrdom, and to have been encouraged thereto by Origen (who was the oldest of his seven children) when not quite seventeen years of age: a fact, which if it were credible, would bear a very equivocal reading.

In the sincerity of his devotion to the cause of *Monkery*—from which Christianity is unquestionably derived “he was guilty of that rash act so well known,” which he held to be his duty as inculcated by Christ in the celebrated Matt. xix. 12. His conduct at least demonstrates the existence of the text, as of high and unquestionable antiquity in his time, and the sincere prostration of his mind to its constraining authority.

This argument, adroitly handled, would constitute one of the very strongest evidences of Christianity: and played off with the blustering airs of sanctification and parade of learning, which are generally called in to the aid of canonical sophistication, might much puzzle the Sciolist in these studies. The difficulty, however, is instantly dissipated upon collation of the character of the text itself, with the facts of history which this *DIEGESIS* supplies.

1. The text itself is unworthy of the character of rational and moral inculcation which Christians generally challenge for the discourses of their divine master.

2. It goes not to the extent of an institution of the practice there spoken of.

3. The practice is allowed, approved, and sanctioned, but not positively enjoined or commanded.

4. The text implies the historical fact of such a practice having existed long anterior to the time of the speaker;—and

5. Necessarily supposes the antiquity and notoriety of its prevalence.—This it is,

“*But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this doctrine, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother’s womb, and there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men, and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.*”

The Jewish law, which strictly forbade the making any sort of cuttings in the flesh, and allowed not an eunuch so much as to enter into the congregation of the Lord,* stands in resistless demonstration of the fact, that these eunuchs were *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*. We have to look then (where we shall assuredly find them,) to the monks of Egypt, who practised these excisions, and whose sacred books were none other than the original, or first written tale, from which our three first gospels are derived,† which had contained the whole gospel story and system of doctrine as imported from India, had been kept in the secret archives of their monastery, and held binding on the consciences of all the *friars* of their monkish society, long anterior to the times of Augustus, in whose reign, or soon after, we may suppose the three evangelists to have been appointed by the Alexandrian College to give *authenticated* versions of them into the Greek language, for the purpose of the more extensive propagation of monkery.

It has been said of Origen, that he had written six thousand volumes. St. Jerom asserts of him, that he had written more than any man could read. And it is from his unwearied pains in reading and writing that some think he had the name *Adamantius*—under which, not without occasioning considerable perplexity, his writings are sometimes quoted. Lardner thus sums up his character; “He had a capacious mind, and a large compass of knowledge, and throughout his whole life was a man

* Deut. xxiii. 1.

† Such was the opinion of Eusebius himself.

of unwearied application in studying and composing works of various sorts. He had the happiness of uniting different accomplishments, being at once the greatest preacher and the most learned and voluminous writer of the age: nor is it easy to say which is most admirable, his learning or his virtue. In a word, it must be owned, that Origen, though not perfect, nor infallible, was a bright light in the church of Christ, and one of those rare personages that have done honour to the human nature."*

He is undoubtedly the most distinguished personage in the whole drama of the Christian evidences, nor can any man who believes Christianity to be a blessing to mankind, have the least hesitation in pronouncing him to have been one of the wisest, greatest, and best of men, that was ever engaged in promoting it.

Nothing is so difficult as to determine the limits of the part this truly great man has borne in the *absolute constitution* of the Christian religion. He is the first author who has given us a distinct catalogue of the books of the New Testament, the first in whose writings such a name occurs as expressive of such a collection of writings: nor would any writings that he had seen fit to reject have ever conquered their way into canonical authority: nor any that he has once admitted, have been rejected. If there be consistency, harmony, or any where in those writings an observance of historical congruity,—the sacred text owes its felicity to the criticisms and emendations of Origen, who pruned excrescences, excinded the more glaring contradictions, inserted whole verses of his own pure ingenuity and conjecture, and diligently laboured, by claiming for the whole a mystical and allegorical sense, to rescue it from the contempt of the wise, and to moderate its excitement on the minds of the vulgar.

His writings contain the finest and adroitest specimens of *under-throwing*, that could be well adduced; they are a sort of looking glass, in which either wise or simple will be sure to see the face he likes best. The all-adoring and all-digesting believer, may read his six thousand volumes and never be startled out of the *brown study* of Christian orthodoxy,—the reader who hath once learned to snuff his candle as he reads, will ever and anon perceive that Origen never played the fool, but once.

* Lardner, vol. i. p. 528.

His character needs only the apology which human nature claims for every man—*his situation*. He was in every sense of the word a master spirit—a civilized being among the wild men of the woods. There is no occasion, however, to act on Dr. Lardner's avowed principle of concealing facts to promote piety.* It is not to be denied, that this wisest, greatest, best that ever bore the Christian name, relapsed at last into Paganism—publicly denied his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, and did sacrifice unto idols. I find that Eusebius as well as Lardner, has omitted all mention of this grand and glorious fact; and but for the avowed intention of Dr. Lardner to promote true piety, I should have considered his not finding it in Eusebius, an excuse for the omission. It is to be found, however, in Origen's own writings, and is confirmed in his *life*, in the Greek of Suidas. His dolorous lamentation and repentance after this outrageous apostacy, presents us with the most authentic, and at the same time most demonstrative view of the interior character of the most primitive Christianity; and must satisfy those who dream of a state of Christianity at any time before the Protestant Reformation, when what are called the principles of the Reformation were the principles of Christianity, how grossly their Protestant teachers have deceived them.

The dolorous Lamentation of Origen.

“In bitter affliction and grief of mind, I address myself unto them which hereafter shall read me thus confoundedly. But how can I speak with tongue tied, with throat dammed up, and lips that refuse their office. I fall to the ground on my bare knees and make this my humble prayer and supplication *unto all the saints*, that they will help me, silly wretch that I am, who by reason of the superfluity of my sin, dare not look up unto God. *O ye saints* of the blessed God! with watery eyes and sodden cheeks soaked in grief and pain, I beseech *you* to fall down before the mercy-seat of God, for me miserable sinner. Woe is me, because of the sorrow of my heart! Woe is me, for the affliction of my soul. Woe is me, O my mother, that ever thou broughtest me forth, an heir of the kingdom of God, but now become an inheritor of the kingdom of the Devil; a perfect man, yea a *priest*, yet

* Lardner, vol. i. p. 552.

found wallowing in impiety; a man beautified with honour and dignity, yet in the end blemished with ignominy and shame; a burning light, yet forthwith darkened; a running fountain, yet bye and bye dried up; O who will give streams of tears unto mine eyes, that I may bewail my sorrowful plight: O my lost priesthood! O my dishonoured ministry; O all you, my friends, tender my case!* Pity me, O all ye, my friends, in that I have now trodden under foot the seal and cognizance of my profession, and joined league with the devil! Pity me, O ye, my friends, in that I am rejected and cast away from the face of God. It is for my lewd life that I am thus polluted, and noted with open shame. Alas, how am I fallen. Alas, how am I thus come to nought! There is no sorrow comparable unto my sorrow; there is no affliction that exceedeth my affliction; there is no lamentation more lamentable than mine; neither is there any sin greater than my sin; and there is no *salve* for me. Alas! O father Abraham! intreat for me, that I be not cut off from thy coasts. Rid me, O Lord, from the roaring lion! The whole assembly of saints doth make intercession unto thee for me. The whole quire of angels do entreat thee for me. Let down upon me thy Holy Spirit, that with his fiery countenance he may put to flight the crooked fiends of the devil! Let me be received again into the joy of my God, through the prayers and intercessions of the saints, through the earnest petitions of the Church which sorroweth over me, and humbleth herself unto Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all glory and honour, for ever and ever. Amen." So far Origen.

I have abridged this intolerably tedious farrago, without breaking a single sentence, or changing or supplying one word not authorized by the original text.

The most distinguished of all the works of Origen is his celebrated answer to Celsus, contained in eight books, and from which, it is a very usual though an unfair thing to assume that we have what ought to be considered as

* So absolutely primitive is the Roman Catholic Church, even in the most exceptionable of its practices, that we have here, the very form of words in which, to this day the benefit of *masses* and prayers for the souls in purgatory, is formally requested, as I have seen them stuck up on the walls of their chapels, in Ireland: and in honest truth it must be infinitely more reasonable to pray to the saints, who being like ourselves, may be *wheedled* to our purposes, than to God, who is necessarily immutable, and consequently inexorable.

the sentiments of Celsus. The exceeding intolerance of Christians against the writings of the enemies of their faith; the fact of the destruction of such as they did write; and the substitution of such as Christians themselves wrote and *fathered* upon them, in order to make them *seem* to have made none other than such objections as were either trifling and weak in themselves, or could be most triumphantly answered, should stand in bar of all reckoning upon Origen's *report* of Celsus's objections. The historical value of this important document is precisely this: it is a certificate to us of what the evidences of Christianity were at the time of its date, in reference to *such* objections as Christians themselves were willing to admit that it was liable to; that is, it instructs us what Christians thought that their adversaries could not but think of them. I subjoin a continuous specimen of this celebrated piece, freely availing myself of Bellamy's translation; though Origen's Greek is in general so lucid and easy, that hardly any translator could mislead us.

ORIGEN'S ANSWER TO CELSUS.

Chapter 1.—"Then Celsus goes on, and asserts that Judaism, with which the Christian religion has a very close connexion, has all along been a barbarous sect, though he *prudently* forbears to reproach the Christian religion, as if it were of a mean and unpolished original."

Chapter 2.—"Now let us see how Celsus reproaches the *practical* part of our religion, as containing nothing but what *we* have in common with the heathens, nothing that is new or truly great. To this I answer, that they who bring down the just judgments of God upon them, by their notorious crimes, would never suffer by the hand of divine and inflexible justice, if all mankind had not some tolerable notions of moral good and evil."

Chapters 3 and 4.—*A curious but idle allegory upon the story of the golden calf.*

Chapter 5.—"Then Celsus, speaking of idolatry, does himself advance an argument that tends to justify and commend our practice. Therefore endeavouring to show in the sequel of his discourse, that our notion of image-worship was not a discovery that was owing to the Scriptures, but that we have it in common with the heathens; he quotes a passage in Heraclitus to this effect.

"To this I answer, that since I have already granted that some common notions of good and evil are originally

implanted in the minds of men, we need not wonder that Heraclitus and others, whether Greeks or barbarians, have publicly acknowledged to the world, that *they* held the very same notions which *we* maintain."

Chapter 6.—"Then Celsus says, that all the power which the Christians had was owing to the names of certain demons, and their invocation of them: But this is a most notorious calumny. For the power which the Christians had was not in the least owing to enchantments, but to their pronouncing the name I. E. S. U. S., and making mention of some remarkable occurrences of his life. Nay, the name of I. E. S. U. S. has such power over demons, that sometimes it has proved effectual, though pronounced by very wicked persons."*

Chapter 7.—Celsus being represented to have objected that Christ was a very wicked man, and wrought his miracles by the power of magic, Origen answers:

"Though we should grant that 'tis difficult for us to determine precisely by what power our Saviour wrought his miracles, yet 'tis very plain that the Christians made use of no enchantments, unless, indeed, the name I. E. S. U. S., and some passages of the Holy Scriptures, were a kind of sacred spell."

Chapter 8.—In this Chapter, Origen admits that there were some ARCANUM IMPERII, or state secrets, which are not fit to be communicated to the vulgar; and justifies the fact, from the secret doctrines of the Pagan philosophy.

Chapter 9.—Presents nothing bearing on Christian evidence.

* The prevalence of this persuasion is strongly implied in the very fair bargain proposed by Simon Magus, who, "*when he saw that through laying on of the Apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.*" (Acts viii. 19.) And in the fatal experiment of the seven sons of Sceva, who attempted to deal with the Devil, without having served a regular apprenticeship—*Jesus I know, and Paul I know*, said the Devil; "*but who are you?*" (Acts xix. 15.) It is directly asserted by the formal proclamation of St. Peter, "*Be it known unto you all, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, doth this man stand here before you whole; for there is none other name under heaven in which we ought to be saved, — οὐδὲν ἄλλο ὄνομα ὑποταγμένον τῷ κυρίῳ ἵνα σωθῶμεν.*" It is a more than curious quadrature with this, and many other passages to the like effect, that the name *Jesus*, and even the name *Jesus Christ of Nazareth* is worshipped in the Catholic church, distinctly from all relation to any person whatever, as having an independent *charm* and virtue in the mystical combination of the letters themselves, like the ABRACADABRA of the Egyptians, the SHEM HEMOPHORESH of the Jews, and the OPEN SASSAME of the Arabians. God forbid it should be thought to have had no more than this sort of talismanic virtue, in its eternal repetitions at the close of our Protestant prayers, "*through Jesus Christ our Lord,*" which ought always to be chanted!

Chapter 10.—"And Celsus continues his discourse, and advises us to embrace no opinions but under the conduct of impartial reason, on account of the many and gross errors to which the contrary practice will shamefully and unavoidably expose us. And he compares those persons who take up any notions without due examination, to the designing priests of Mithras, Bacchus, Cybele, Hecate, or any other mock deity of the heathens. For as these impostors, having once got the ascendant over the common people, who were grossly ignorant, could turn and wind these silly cattle, as their interest or fancy might direct,* so he says, the very same thing was known to be the common practice of the Christians."

In answer to this really formidable objection, instead of producing distinct historical testimony to demonstrate that the history of Jesus Christ rested on rational and convincing evidence, and could not therefore be fairly put on a level with the fabulous legends of those mock deities, that never had any existence but in the conceit of their deluded worshippers, Origen himself *defends* and justifies the self-same principle of *implicit faith*, from which all those fabulous legends and mock deities derived their authority, and proceeds—

"A vast number of persons who have left those horrid debaucheries in which they formerly wallowed, and have professed to embrace the Christian religion, shall receive a bright and massy crown when this frail and short life is ended, though they don't stand to examine the grounds on which their faith is built, nor defer their conversion till they have a fair opportunity and capacity to apply themselves to rational and learned studies. And since our adversaries are continually making such a stir about our taking things on trust,† I answer, that we, who see plainly and have found the vast advantage that the common people do manifestly and frequently reap thereby—(who make up by far the greater number)—I say, we (the Christian clergy), who are so well advised of these things, do professedly teach men to believe without a severe examination."

* Surely this objection of Celsus, as allowed to have been made by him, by his adversary, is a proof that he was a wise and good man, and never did or would have shut his mind against evidence, or have hardened his heart against conviction. It is utterly impossible that such a man should have rejected Christianity, had it in his days possessed historical and rational evidences.

† So! so!—So! so! And this, it seems, was the grievance from the first. The heathens wanted rational evidence for Christianity; but Christians could not produce it!

Chapter 33.—"I have this to say further to the Greeks, who won't believe that our Saviour was born of a Virgin; that the Creator of the world, if he pleases can make every animal bring forth its young in the same wonderful manner.* As for instance, the vultures which propagate their kind in this uncommon way, as the best writers of natural history do acquaint us. What absurdity is there then in supposing, that the all-wise God, designing to bless mankind with an extraordinary and truly divine teacher, should so order matters, that our blessed Saviour should not be born in the ordinary way of human generation."

The work of Celsus, which Origen thus refutes, appears to have been entitled *THE TRUE WORD*, or the *True Logos*, written at least one hundred years before the time of Origen.

"Celsus and Porphyry," says Chrysostom, "are sufficient witnesses to the antiquity of the scriptures; for I presume that they did not oppose writings which had been published since their own times."† This writer, however, chooses to forget that it is not true that we are in possession of the evidence of Celsus and Porphyry. Nor would evidence of the antiquity of the scriptures afford any presumption that they were written by the persons to whom they are ascribed; while the presumption remains, that they are actually *too* ancient, and were, as to their general story and contents, in being *before* the life-time of those persons.

Dr. Lardner pronounces this answer of Origen to Celsus "an excellent performance, greatly esteemed and celebrat-

* From this it should seem, that the holy Virgin laid an egg; and that our blessed Saviour should rather be said to have been *hatched* than *born*. This sense is further supported by the express assurance of scripture, that the male agent in his generation, was, "in bodily shape like a dove."—Mark i. 10, John i. 32. Read, also, with awful reverence, that angelic testimony "*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall—ἐπισκιάσει—thee; therefore, also, that holy thing* (observe, it is not said *child* or *babe*, but that *holy thing*,) *which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.*"—Luke i. 35. Milton describes this as the peculiar function of the Holy Spirit, who

"Dove-like, sat brooding on the vast abyss,
And made it pregnant."—*Paradise Lost*, Book i.

And as it might seem in relation to this adorable mystery, the prophet Isaiah asks, "Who shall declare his generation?" Ch. liii. v. 8. I abhor no impiety more affectionately than that of our Unitarian divines, the most inconsistent, the most egregious, the most absurd of all sophists, who hesitate not at the most audacious blasphemies upon the mystical incarnation, and persist in representing Christ as a *mere* man, though unable to produce so much as one single proof, either scriptural or historical, that any such *mere* man ever existed at all.

† Lardner, vol. iv. p. 114.

ed, not only by Eusebius and Jerom, but likewise by many judicious men of late times, particularly by Dupin, who says, that it is polite, just, and methodical ; not only the best work of Origen, but the completest and best written apology for the Christian religion, which the ancients have left us."

ST. GREGORY, *Thaumaturgus*, A. D. 243.

Bishop of Neocæsarea.

I cannot present the reader with fairer grounds of judging of the whole worth and value of the evidences of the Christian religion, than by laying before him what those evidences will require him to believe of the characters and actions of the most remarkable personages concerned in its establishment and propagation. This I do, in none other than the lines and colours, the showing and acknowledgments, their own representations in their own words, not of the humbler and feebler advocates of Christianity, but of such as Christians themselves with justice and reason boast of, as the best, discreetest and ablest defenders their cause ever had. If Dr. Lardner could not have given a just and faithful representation of what the evidences of the Christian religion really were, or has not done so ; who on earth shall be proposed as worthier of all acceptation ? If on *his* representation it shall appear that Christianity rests ultimately and strictly on *miraculous* evidence, and on the probability of a continuous series of divine interpositions and interferences of the almighty power of God, not merely at first to promulge, but afterwards to propagate and continue this supernatural intimation of his will to man ; what right or reason have our Unitarian divines to give themselves insolent airs of philosophical assurance, or to affect to treat those who reject miraculous evidence, as if they could not do so without rejecting historical fact and rational probability at the same time ?

ST. GREGORY, Bishop of Neocæsarea in Pontus, was one of Origen's most noted scholars. It is fit we should now have a more particular history of this renowned convert and bishop, of the best times or near them, who is usually called *Thaumaturgus*, or the Wonder-worker,

* Dupin, *Bibl. Origines*, p. 142.

for the many and great miracles wrought by him.* Gregory's parents were Gentiles.—“As soon as Origen saw Gregory (when a youth), and his brother Athenodorus, he neglected no means to inspire them with a love of philosophy, as a foundation of true religion and piety.† Of Origen they learned logic, physics, geometry, astronomy, ethics. He encouraged them in reading of all sorts of ancient authors, poets, and philosophers, whether Greeks or barbarians, restraining them from none but such as denied a Deity or a Providence, from whom no possible advantage could be obtained.” From Gregory of Nyssa, in Cappadocia, who flourished about a hundred years after this Gregory Thaumaturgus, Dr. Lardner transcribes the most material things of his life. Nyssen says, that Gregory studied secular learning for some time at *Alexandria*, where there was a great resort of youth from all parts for the sake of philosophy and medicine. Our young Gregory was even then distinguished by the sobriety and discretion which appeared in his conduct. “A lewd woman having been employed by some idle people to disgrace him by indirect but impudent insinuations, his reputation was vindicated in a remarkable manner, for the woman was immediately seized with such horrible fits, as demonstrated them to be a judgment of heaven: nor was she relieved from the *demon* that had taken possession of her, till Gregory had interceded with God for her, and obtained the pardon of her fault.” This *miracle* occurred while Gregory was yet a heathen—“his family however, was rich and noble.” His ordination to the Christian ministry, it seems, took place even before his conversion to Christianity. “Phedimus, Bishop of Amasea, knowing the worth of this young man, and being grieved that a person of such accomplishments should live useless in the world, was desirous to consecrate him to God and his church;” but “Gregory was shy of such a charge, and industriously concealed himself from the bishop, whose

* Lardner, vol. i. p. 243. I punctiliously give the words of Lardner; that the reader may see with what a grace this rational *Socinian* grapples with miracles which he cannot believe, and dare not deny.

† This *philosophy*, which we meet with at every turn, as always constituting the *basis* of the Christian religion; this *Alexandria*, always the centre and nursery of this philosophy; these congresses of lazy pedants in universities, where young men are to be *trained*, and *broken in* to the business of becoming impostors themselves in their turn, are matters, at the least infinitely suspectable. Honesty never needed them! Compare p. 314 and 319, in this *DIEGESIS*. Justin, Melito &c. all professors in like manner of this Eclectic philosophy.

design he was aware of. At length, Phedimus, tired of his fruitless attempts to meet Gregory, and being blessed with the gift of foreknowledge, consecrated him to God, though bodily absent, assigning him also a city which till that time was so addicted to idolatry, that in it, and in all the country round about, there were not above seventeen believers. Gregory was then at the distance of three days journey. He only desired of him by whom he had been ordained, a short time to prepare himself for the office, nor had he courage to undertake the work of preaching, till he had been informed of the truth by revelation. And while he was engaged in deep meditation, he had a magnificent and awful vision in his chamber." The Virgin Mary, and St. John the beloved disciple, appeared to him, "encompassed also by a bright light too strong for him to look upon directly. He heard these persons discourse together about the doctrines in which he desired to be informed, and he perceived who they were, for they called each other by name; and the Virgin desired that John the Evangelist would teach that young man the *Mystery of Piety*, and he replied, that he was not unwilling to do what was desired by the mother of our Lord. John then gave the instruction he wanted, which, when they had disappeared, Gregory wrote down. According to *that faith* he always preached; and left it with his church as an invaluable treasure, by which means his people from that time to this, were preserved from all heretical pravity."

Then follows the stupendous miracle, which I find quoted in Middleton's Free Inquiry, which I here abridge as much as possible:—

The holy Gregory, in travelling to take possession of his bishopric, was overtaken by a storm and benighted, so that for shelter he was obliged to spend the night in one of the heathen temples; in consequence of which, when the priest came to perform their idolatrous rites the next morning, "he was answered by the demon, that he could no more appear in that place, because of him who had lodged there the foregoing night. The priest greatly enraged at this, pursued Gregory, and threatened to inform the magistrates against him; but Gregory told the priest, that" God had given him such divine power, that "he could expel demons from any place and re-admit them as he saw fit: and as a demonstration of such power, he took a slip of paper and wrote upon it the words 'Gregory

to Satan : Enter !" This paper being laid upon the altar, and the accustomed Paganish rites performed, the demon appeared as usual ; which so convinced the Pagan priest of the superior power possessed by Christians, that he left the service of Satan, and became a minister of Jesus Christ, and was afterwards one of Gregory's deacons.—But some doubts still remaining, Gregory wrought another evident miracle—at his command a large heavy stone lying before them, moved as if it had life, and settled itself in the place Gregory directed."

Again, there were two brothers at variance with each other, whom Gregory could by no means reconcile. A certain lake was the matter in dispute. When they were about to decide the cause by arms, Gregory went to the lake the night before, and at his prayers it was dried up ; so that there was no lake left for them to contend for.

Again :—"The river Sycus often overflowing, to the great damage of the neighbouring country, at the desire of the people who suffered by its inundations, Gregory prescribed its proper limits, which it never passed afterwards."

"After his return to Neocæsarea, Gregory cured a young man possessed of a demon ; and a great many people were delivered from demons, and released of their diseases by only having a piece of linen brought to them, which had been breathed upon by him."

After these, and several other marvellous relations of the same sort, and some trifling objections started against them, it is of importance that the reader should be aware, that it is none other than the judicious and learned *Dr. Lardner himself*, who is driven to the *distress* of having to say—

"I do not intend to deny that Gregory wrought miracles ; for I suppose he did, as I shall acknowledge more particularly by and bye. Nevertheless, there is no harm in making these remarks, if they are just, or in showing that Nyssen's relations are defective, and want some tokens of credibility with which we should have been mightily pleased."

Gregory's works are, a panegyric oration in praise of Origen, pronounced in 239, still extant, and unquestionably his. Dupin says that it is very eloquent, and that it may be reckoned one of the finest pieces of rhetoric in all antiquity—a paraphrase of the book of Ecclesiastes, and that self-same creed or copy of the faith which we may

believe he copied immediately from the dictation of St. John.

“ His history, as delivered by authors of the fourth and following centuries, particularly by Nyssen, it is to be feared, has in it somewhat of fiction ; but,” adds Dr. Lardner—(yes, they are the very words of Lardner himself)—“ there can be no reasonable doubt made but he was very successful in making converts to Christianity in the country of Pontus, about the middle of the third century ; and that beside his natural and acquired abilities, he was favoured with extraordinary gifts of the spirit, and wrought *miracles of surprising power*. The plain and express testimonies of Basil and others, at no great distance of time and place from Gregory, must be reckoned sufficient grounds of credit with regard to these things. The *extraordinary gifts of the spirit* had not then entirely ceased ; but Gregory was favoured with such gifts greatly beyond the common measure of other Christians or bishops at that season. Yet, as St. Jerom intimates, it is likely that he was more famous for his signs and wonders than his writings.”*

With respect to Gregory’s appointing anniversary festivals and solemnities in honour of the martyrs of his diocese, (as I have already given the important passage from Mosheim, in the chapter of Admissions,†) Dr. Lardner contends against it, that he is “unwilling to take this particular upon the credit of Nyssen ; because this childish method of making converts appears unworthy of so wise and good a man as Gregory. Nor is it likely that those festivals should be instituted by *one who had the gift of miracles*, and therefore a much better way of bringing men to religion and virtue.” See all these passages, purporting to be from Dr. Lardner’s immortal work on the Credibility of the Gospel History, in his first volume, under the article St. Gregory of Neocæsarea. I have selected this Life of Pope Gregory the Wonder-worker, not so much to show the picture as the painter ; and to set before my readers a demonstration of the important and consequential fact, that the ablest and most rational advocate of Christianity, is, in its vindication, driven on the necessity of using a sort of language which, on any other theme than that, he

* His writings are not to be disparaged, since they afford the clearest evidence of the genuineness of his miracles, by proving that he was *no conjuror*.

† See *DIEGESIS*, p. 48.

would have been ashamed of. We see the most eminent of all writers on the Christian evidences, driven to the *God-help-us* of subscribing to a belief in the most ridiculous and contemptible miracles, rather than he will accept, even from his own authorities, the clear and natural solution of the difficulty—even that he who was ordained a Christian bishop, while yet he continued a Pagan, should have owed his success in converting others to the same *slide-the-butcher* system which had been so successfully practiced on himself; that is, letting them continue Pagans all the while, only *calling* them Christians.

From the short notice which Socrates has of this Father, it should seem that the Holy Ghost was somewhat premature in his gifts to Gregory, since he got possession of the power of working miracles before he became a convert to the Christian faith: “being yet a layman, he wrought many miracles, he cured the sick, chased away devils by his epistles, and converted the Gentiles and Ethnics unto the faith, not only with words, but by deeds of a far greater force.”*

ST. CYPRIAN, A. D. 248.

Bishop of Carthage.

Thascius Cæcilius Cyprianus was an African, who was converted from Paganism to Christianity, in the year 246, and suffered martyrdom in the year 258. So that the greatest part of his life was spent in heathenism. Cyprian had a good estate, which he sold and gave to the poor immediately upon his conversion. His advancement to the highest offices of the church was strikingly rapid; he was made presbyter the year after his conversion, and bishop of Carthage, the year after that. And let it not seem invidious to state, what may be a *characteristic truth*, in the words of Dr. Lardner himself, “The estate which Cyprian had sold for the benefit of the poor, was by *some favourable providence* restored to him again.” He was bishop of a most flourishing church, the metropolis of a province, and neither in fame nor fortune a loser by his conversion.

There can be no just grounds to disparage the renown of his martyrdom: which though unquestionably dis-

* Socrates Scholast. lib. 4, c. 22.

graceful to the government under which it happened, was not attended with any of those aggravating circumstances of childish cruelty, which throw an air of suspicion over almost all the other narratives of martyrdom, that have come down to us. Cyprian had rendered himself obnoxious to the government under which he had long enjoyed his episcopal dignity in peace and safety;* and it is impossible not to see from the intolerant turbulence of his character, his restless ambition, and his inordinate claims of more than human authority; that more than human patience would have been required on the part of any government on earth, to have brooked the eternal clashings of the civil administration with his assumed superior authority over the minds of the subjects of the empire. He had been twice banished, and subsequently recalled, and reinstated in his possessions and dignities; but again and again persisting in holding councils and assemblies, and enacting decrees, in defiance and actual solicitation of martyrdom, he was judicially sentenced to be beheaded, upon which, he exclaimed, *God be thanked*, and suffered accordingly, on the 14th of September, in the year 258. As his own historians tell the tale, his execution was attended with no additional circumstance of cruelty, anger, or indignation, but occurred amidst the sympathy of his Christian friends, and the admiration and regret even of those whom a sense of public duty had enforced to condemn him. "It is needless," says St. Jerom, "to give a catalogue of his works, they are *brighter than the sun*." St. Austin calls him a blessed martyr, and there can be no doubt that he has as good a claim, as any other tyrant who ever expiated his tyranny in the same way, to that title.

* "The constitution of every particular church in those times was a well-tempered monarchy. The bishop was the monarch, and the presbytery was his senate."—*Principles of the Cyprianic age, by John Sage, a Scottish bishop, 1695, p. 32.* * "Cyprian carried his spiritual authority to such a pitch, as to claim the right of putting his rebellious and unruly deacon to death."—*Ibid. p. 33.* Surely here was cause enough to induce any government, to call such a traitor to some sort of reckoning!

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE FATHERS OF THE FOURTH CENTURY.

—
 CONSTANTINE, A. D. 306.

THE character with whom, next to Origen, it most concerns the Christian inquirer to be acquainted, is the emperor Constantine the Great, under whose reign and auspices, Christianity became the established religion, and but for whom, as far as human probabilities can be calculated, it never would have come down to us.

CONSTANTINE, called the Great, son of Flavius Valerius Constantius, surnamed Chlorus, and Helena, was born on the 27th of February, in the year of Christ 272, or as some think, in 273, or as others, in 274, was converted to the Christian religion on the night of the 26th of October, A. D. 312, became sole emperor both of the East and West, about the year 324, reigned about thirty-one years from the death of his father, Constantius; and died on Whitsunday, May 22d, 348,* Felicianus and Tatian being consuls, the second year of the two hundred and seventy-eighth Olympiad, in the sixty-sixth year of his age.†

The bearings on the evidences of the Christian religion demand from us—that we should inform ourselves of the character of this great hero of the cause,

1. As drawn by Christian historians and divines,
2. As appearing in the incontrovertible evidence of admitted facts,
3. The ostensible motives of his conversion,
4. The evidences of the Christian religion as they appeared to him.

I. “I do, by no means,” says Dr. Lardner, “think that Constantine was a man of cruel disposition.—(p. 342.) Though there may have been some transactions in his reign which cannot be easily justified, and others that must be condemned: yet we are not to consider Constantine as a cruel prince or a bad man.”‡

* Lardner's Credibility, vol. ii. p. 327.

† Socrates Scholasticus, bib. i. c. 26.

‡ See my 14th letter from Oakham published in the 1st. and 2d. volumes of the Lion.

“Constantine was remarkably tall, of a comely and majestic presence, and great bodily strength.* It may be concluded, from the whole tenor of his life, that he was a person of no mean capacity. Indeed, his mind was equal to his fortune, great as it was, his chastity,† together with his valour, justice, and prudence, is commended by a heathen panegyrist ; his many acts of bounty to the poor, and his just edicts, are arguments of a merciful disposition and a love of justice. He was, moreover, a sincere believer of the Christian religion, of which he, first of all the Roman emperors, made an open profession.

“In a word, the conversion of Constantine to Christianity was a favour of divine providence, and of great advantage to the Christians, and his reign may be reckoned a blessing to the Roman empire on the whole.” Thus far, Dr. Lardner.‡

I find no directly drawn character of Constantine in the Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus, except that he tells us, in general terms, that “Constantine the emperor, fixing his whole mind upon such things as set forth the glory of God, behaved himself in all things as becometh a Christian, erecting churches from the ground, and adorning them with goodly and *gorgeous* consecrated ornaments : moreover, shutting up the temples of the Heathens, and publishing unto the world (in way of derision) the gay images glittering within them.”§ In his decrees and letters as preserved by this historian, Constantine entitles himself “the puissant, the mighty, and noble emperor,” and in the synodical epistle of the Council of Nice, he is called “the most virtuous emperor, the most godly emperor, Constantine.”||

The mouldering pages of the historian Evagrius, who had been one of the emperor’s lieutenants, are enlivened with a truly evangelical invective against the Ethnic Zosimus, in which no better names than, “O wicked spirit ! thou fiend of hell ! O thou lewd varlet !” &c. are found, for his having dared to defame the godly and noble emperor, Constantine.¶

But Eusebius—who would never lie nor falsify, except to promote the glory of God,—the *conscientious*

* “Whether Helena was the lawful wife of Constantius Chlorus, or only his concubine, is a disputable point.”—Lardner, vol. ii. p. 322.

† What has that to do with it ?

‡ Vol. i. p. 345.

§ Socrates Sch. Eccl. Hist. lib. ii. c. 2.

|| Socrates, lib. i. c. 6.

¶ Evagrius, lib. iii. c. 41.

Eusebius Pamphilus, who has written his life, seems to know no bounds of exaggeration in his praise. "I am amazed" (says this veracious bishop, on whose fidelity all our knowledge of ecclesiastical antiquity must ultimately depend) "I am amazed, when I contemplate such singular piety and goodness. Moreover, when I look up to heaven, and in my mind behold his blessed soul living in God's presence, and there invested (*crowned*) with a blessed and unfading wreath of immortality; considering this, I am oppressed with silent amazement, and my weakness makes me dumb, resigning his due encomium to Almighty God, who alone can give to Constantine the praise he merits."

"Constantine alone, of all the Roman emperors, was beloved of God, and hath left us the idea of his most pious and religious life as an inimitable example for other men to follow, at a humble distance."*

"Constantine was the first of all the emperors who was regenerated by the new birth of baptism, and signed with the sign of the cross; and being thus regenerated, his mind was so illuminated, and by the raptures of faith so transported, that he admired in himself the wonderful work of God: and when the centurions and captains admitted to his presence, did bewail and mourn for his approaching death, because they should lose so good and gracious a prince, he answered them, 'that he now only began to live, and that he now only began to be sensible of happiness, and therefore, he now only desired to hasten, rather than to slack or stay his passage to God.'†

"For he alone of all the Roman emperors did, with most religious zeal, honour and worship God. He alone, with great liberty of speech, did profess the gospel of Jesus Christ. He alone, did honour his church more than all the rest. He alone, abolished the wicked adoration of idols; and, therefore, he alone, both in his life and after his death, hath been crowned with such honours as no one hath obtained, neither among the Grecians nor Barbarians, nor in former times, among the Romans. Since no age hath produced any thing that might be paralleled or compared to Constantine."‡ So much for his praise!

* The learned reader will find I take some liberties with the text, never departing, however, from its sense—but, "*an inimitable example for all men to follow*," which is the literality, is Irish rather than English panegyric.

† Life of Constantine, lib. iv. c. 63.

‡ Ibid. lib. iv. c. 75.

II. "*Murder, though it hath no tongue, will speak with most miraculous organ.*"

The adulations of interested sycophants, and the applause of priests and bishops, will not erase the more convincing evidence of those stubborn things, *facts*, that will not be suppressed, and cannot lie. Even Lardner, who omits entirely the circumstances of aggravation, acknowledges the deeds, which give a very different complexion to Constantine's character, from that, which the honour of Christianity requires that it should wear. The hireling voice of priestcraft would extol him to the skies. Nor ought we in judging of the worth of a churchman's panegyric, to forget that even the cautious and ingenuous Lardner, who has, without evidence of a single act of wrong against him, branded the amiable and matchlessly virtuous Julian, as a persecutor, has not one ill word to spare for the Christian Constantine, who drowned his unoffending wife, FAUSTA, in a bath of boiling water, beheaded his eldest son, Crispus, in the very year in which he presided in the Council of Nice, murdered the two husbands of his sisters Constantia, and Anastasia, murdered his own father-in-law, Maximian Herculus, murdered his own nephew, being his sister Constantia's son, a boy only twelve years old, and murdered a few others!* which actions, Lardner, with truly Christian moderation, tells us, "*seem to cast a reflection upon him.*" Among those few others, never be it forgotten, was Sopater, the Pagan priest, who fell a victim and a martyr to the sincerity of his attachment to Paganism, and to the honesty of his refusing the consolations of heathenism to the conscience of the royal murderer.

"The death of Crispus, (says Dr. Lardner) is altogether without any good excuse; so likewise is the death of the young Licinianus, who could not then be more than a little above eleven years of age, and appears not to have been charged with any fault, and can hardly be suspected of any."† Then why may we not consider Constantine

* His slaughter bill, methodically arranged, runs thus :—

Maximian	-	-	His wife's father	-	-	A. D.	310
Bassianus	-	-	His sister Anastasia's husband	-	-		314
Licinianus	-	-	His nephew, by Constantina	-	-		319
Fausta	-	-	His wife	-	-		320
Sopater	-	-	His former friend	-	-		321
Licinius	-	-	His sister Constantia's husband	-	-		325
Crispus	-	-	His own son	-	-		326

Religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta.—*Lucret. lib. 1, v. 84.*

† Lardner, vol. 2, p. 342.

to have been either a cruel prince or a bad man? "Here then, (continues Lardner, whose work is written expressly to promote *true piety and virtue*,) here lies the general excuse, or alleviation of these faults, (*peccadilloes*, he means.) Prosperity is a dangerous state, full of temptation, and puts men off their guard, and all these executions happened very near to one another, when Constantine was come as it were to the top of his fortune, and was in the greatest prosperity."* Reader! imagine thou seest his noble son imploring a father's mercy—but in vain. Imagine thou seest his innocent wife supplicating for rather any other death at his hands than that most horrible one of the boiling bath—but in vain. Think that thou seest the poor unoffending child upon his knees, lifting his innocent hands to beg his life, and his most holy uncle will not regard him. Think that thou hearest the distracted shrieks of the fond doating mother, the beautiful Constantia, with dishevelled hair and heart-broken moans, entreating her brother to spare her son—but in vain. Not a wife's anguish, nor a sister's tears, nor nearest of kindred, nor matchless woman's tenderness, nor guileless youth's innocence, could soften the heart of this evangelical cut-throat, this godly and holy child-killer. Then, contemplate the coin which Eusebius tells us was struck to perpetuate his memory, "whereon was engraven the effigies of this blessed man, with a scarf bound about his head, on the one side, and on the other sitting and driving a chariot, and a hand reached down from heaven to receive and take him up.†"

When one finds such a writer as Lardner, (to say nothing of the egregious falsifications of Eusebius) thus endeavouring to whitewash Constantine, because he was a *Christian* emperor, and to affix on those paragons of human virtue, Julian and Marcus Antonius, the guilt of persecution, merely because they were *Pagan* emperors, not only without evidence against them, but in conflict with the most irrefragible proofs that they were as clear from that guilt, as the sun's disk from darkness; it is not illiberal to find the only excuse we can for these historians, to blame their *principles* rather than themselves, and to conclude that there is something in the strength and intensity of their religious affection, which suspends in

* Lardner, vol. 2, p. 343.

† Eusebius's Life of Constantine, book 4, chap. 73, p. 76, fol.

them the faculty of perceiving or communicating truths, so long as that affection is in its paroxysm.”*

It is however highly honourable to Lardner, that he has the generosity to speak in terms of less qualified censure of Constantine’s intolerance, and to admit that the two prevailing evils of his reign, were avarice and hypocrisy.† “The laws of Constantine against the heathens,” he acknowledges, “are not to be justified. How should Constantine have a right to prohibit all his subjects from sacrificing and worshipping at the temples? Would he have liked this treatment, if some other prince had become a Christian at that time, and he still remained a heathen? What reason had he to think that all men received light and conviction when he did? And if they were not convinced, how could he expect that they should act as he did.”‡

Monsieur Le Clerc justly observes, that “they that continued heathens were no doubt extremely shocked at the manner in which the statues of their gods were treated, and could not consider the Christians as men of moderation; for in short, those statues were as dear to them, as any thing the most sacred could be to the Christians.§

In the form and wording of several of Constantine’s edicts, we have specimens of that conjunction of holiness and blood-thirstiness, religion and murder, which portrays his character with a precision and fidelity that needs no further illustration.

1. “*Constantine the puissant, the mighty and noble emperor, unto the bishops, pastors, and people wheresoever.*

“Moreover we thought good, that if there can be found extant any work or book compiled by Arius, the same should be burned to ashes, so that not only his damnable doctrine may thereby be wholly rooted out, but also that no relic thereof may remain unto posterity. This also we straightly command and charge, that if any man be found to hide or conceal any book made by Arius, and not immediately bring forth the said book, and deliver it up to be burned, that the said offender for so doing *shall die the death.* For as soon as he is taken, our pleasure is,

* See this deduction illustrated in a succession of the Author’s letters from Oakham, in “The Lion,” vol. 1.

† Lardner’s Credibility, vol. 2, p. 345.

‡ Ibid. p. 344

§ Bibl. Univ. t. 15, p. 54.

that his head be stricken off from his shoulders. God keep you in his tuition.”*

Constantine's speech in the council concerning peace and concord.

2. “Having by God's assistance, gotten the victory over mine enemies, I entreat you therefore, beloved ministers of God, and servants of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, *to cut off the heads of this hydra of heresy, for so shall ye please both God and me.*”†

III. MOTIVES OF CONSTANTINE'S CONVERSION.

As say his friends.

“Constantine the Emperor, being certified of the tyrannous government of Maxentius, devised with himself which way possibly he might rid the Romans from under this grievous yoke of servitude, and despatch the tyrant out of life. Deliberating thus with himself, he forecasted also *what God*, he were best to call upon for aid, to wage battle with the adversary. He remembered how that Diocletian who wholly dedicated himself unto the service of the heathenish Gods, prevailed nothing thereby; also he persuaded himself for certain, that his father Constantius, who renounced the idolatry of the Gentiles, led a more fortunate life:‡ musing thus doubtfully with himself, and taking his journey with his soldiers, a certain vision appeared unto him, as it was strange to behold, so indeed incredible to be spoken of. About noon, the day somewhat declining, he saw in the sky, a pillar of light, in the form of a cross, whereon was engraved the inscription, ‘*In this overcome.*’ This vision so amazed the emperor, that he, mistrusting his own sight, demanded of them that were present, whether they perceived the vision, which when all with one consent had affirmed, the wavering mind of the Emperor, was settled with that divine and wonderful sight. The night following, Jesus Christ himself appeared to him, in his sleep, saying—‘*Frame to thyself the form of a cross after the example of the sign which appeared unto thee, and bear the same against thy enemies as a fit banner, or token of victory.*’”§

* In Socrates Scholasticus, lib. 1, c. 6, fol. p. 227.

† Euseb. Vita Const. lib. 3, c. 12.

‡ Compare this with the apology of Melito; and the result is, a demonstration that good or ill luck was all that turned the scale between the claims of Christianity and of Paganism.—DIEGESIS, p. 320.

§ Socrates Eccl. Hist. lib. 1, c. 1. It is to be regretted that these words of Christ have not been received into the canon of the New Testament, as it is certain there are none therein contained, of higher authority.

But let us hear the account of "that lewd varlet," "that wicked spirit and fiend of hell,"* as Socrates calls him, the Ethnic Zosimus, who dared to revile Constantine, and rail at Christians. These fiends of hell make none the worse historians, but always contrive to give an air of *rational* probability to their infernal falsehoods, which divine truth (being written solely to exercise our faith) could never pretend to—"This lewd varlet goeth about to defame the godly and noble emperor Constantine, for he saith, that he slew his son Crispus *very lamentably*; that he despatched his wife Fausta, by shutting her up in a boiling bath; that when he would have had his priest to purge him by sacrifice, of these horrible murthers, and could not have his purpose, (for they had answered plainly, it lay not in their power to cleanse him), he lighted at last upon an Egyptian who came out of Iberia, and being persuaded by him that the Christian faith was of force to wipe away every sin, were it never so heinous, he embraced willingly all whatever the Egyptian told him."†

Lardner says this is a false and absurd story; and to make it appear to be so, he renders the text of Zosimus, without supplying it as usual at the bottom of his page, as if it had ran, that "Constantine being conscious to himself of those bad actions, and also of the breach of oaths,‡ and being told by the priests of his old religion, that there was no kind of purgation sufficient to expiate such enormities, he began to hearken to a Spaniard, named *Ægyptius*, then at Court, who assured him that the Christian doctrine contained a promise of the pardon of all manner of sin."

I suspect Dr. Lardner's copy of Zosimus of a mendacious substitution of the words which he renders "*a Spaniard named Ægyptius, then at Court*," instead of those acknowledged in the independent and hostile quotation of Socrates, "that *he met an Egyptian coming out of Iberia*, in order to keep in the back ground, as much as possible,

* Socrates, lib. 8, c. 40, 41. When we hear language of this sort, we may be sure that somebody has been *telling the truth*. Consult that holy blackguard, the Reverend Dr. J. P. S. and his *Rejoinder*, for the character of the Author. Billingsgate surrenders the honours of the fish-market, to the transcendent ruffianism of the college.

† Ibid. lib. 3, c. 40.—See also the original text of Zosimus to this effect, given in my "*Syntagma*," p. 112.

‡ The holy emperor had bound himself by the most solemn oaths to protect Licinius, but slew him notwithstanding. He had the example of the man after God's own heart to justify this peccadillo, 1 Kings, ii. 8, 9.

the startling *denouement* of historical fact, that Christianity is really *not* of Jewish, but of *Egyptian* derivation.* As for its absurdity, *they* should not throw stones who live in houses of glass.

Sozomen has a whole chapter on purpose to confute such accounts of Constantine's conversion ; in which he admits (which one would think were admission enough,) that the emperor made some such application to a Pagan priest of the name of SOPATER, who had been his faithful friend ; but that Sopater refused to administer spiritual consolation, asserting that the purity of the gods admitted of no compromise with crimes like his. Whereupon, Constantine applied to the bishops of Christianity, " who promised him that by repentance and baptism they could cleanse him from all sin ;"† taking into the reckoning, we must suppose, the sin (if a sin they held it to be) of murdering poor Sopater, the Pagan priest ; whom, upon his conversion to the Christian faith, Constantine took care to have put to death.

It is from the arguments which his best friends and most zealous advocates advance in his favour, and the pitiful chicane with which they feebly attempt to conflict with the facts which his enemies, or rather the impartial documents of history allege against him, that we gather a true knowledge of the character of the first Christian emperor.

Thus the learned Christian historian Pagi, with equal humanity and orthodoxy, affects to repel every accusation that the tongue of slander might object against this holy emperor :—" As for those few murders, if Eusebius had thought it worth his while to refer to them, he would perhaps, with Baronius himself have said, that the young Licinius (his infant nephew), although the fact might not generally have been known, had most likely been an accomplice in the treason of his father. That as to the murder of his son, the emperor is rather to be considered as unfortunate than as criminal. And with respect to his putting his wife to death, he ought to be pronounced rather a just and righteous judge. As for his numerous friends, whom Eutropius informs us he put to death one after another, we are bound to believe that they most of

* Compare with Chap. 29, THE SIGN OF THE CROSS, in this *DIEGESIS*, p. 198.

† Ταῦτα συνεπιστάμενος αὐτῷ, καὶ προσέτις ὅρκων καταφρονήδεις, προσήει τοῖς ἱερεῦσι καθάρσια αὐτοῦ.—*Zosimus*. Ἀδμονοῦντα δὲ τὸν βασιλεῖα ἐπὶ τῇ ἀπαγορεύσει, περιτρυγὲν Ἐπισκοποῖς, οἱ μετὰ νοῖα καὶ βαπτισματὶ ὑπὸ χόρτου. Πένης αὐτοῦ ἀμαρτίας καθάρειν.—*Sozomen*.

them deserved it, as they were found out to have abused the emperor's *too great credulity*, for the gratification of their own inordinate wickedness, and insatiable avarice: and such no doubt was that SOPATER the philosopher, who was at last put to death upon the accusation of Adlabius, and that by the righteous dispensation of God, for his having attempted to alienate the mind of Constantine from the true religion."* Dr. Lardner quotes this important passage in his notes, for the benefit of the *learned* reader, but gives no rendering into English of the most important clause in it: which I have here supplied.

We have horrors on horrors in detail of martyrdoms in the cause of Christianity—here was a martyr in the cause of Paganism, of whom, as of millions whom Christians massacred, it was considered a sufficiently fair account either with Lardner to think their cases utterly unworthy of notice, or with Pagi to assume, that they had their throats cut and their property turned over to the faithful, by the just dispensations of God upon them for not being of the emperor's religion. One's heart smarts at the unfeeling exultation of Eusebius over the cold-blooded massacres of Pagans, who, he tells us, "as they formerly reposed an insolent vain hope in their false gods, so now, upon being executed and put to death according to their desert, they truly understood how great and admirable the God of Constantine was."† The war against Constantine he throughout assumes to be, and expressly calls "*The war against God.*"†

* De cædibus autem si rationem in particulari reddere voluisset, dixisset forsitan cum ipso Baronio, Licinium juniorem ex sorore Constantiâ natum, etsi causa vulgo ignoraretur, verosimiliter tamen complicem patri suo fuisse: In Crispo filio, infelicem magis quam reum: In Fausta conjuge, etiam justum judicem appellandum: Numerosos amicos quos successive interfectos scribit Eutropius, lib. 10, credendum, plerosque id commeritos, quod nimiâ principis credulitate tandem deprehenderentur abusi ob suam exuberantem malitiam et insatiabilem cupiditatem. Qualis proculdubio fuit SOPATER ille philosophus, tandem Adlabio agente, interfectus, idque justa Dei dispensatione quia Constantinum conatus a vera religione abalienare.—Pagi, *Ann.* 324, n. 12, *quoted by Lardner, vol. 4, p. 371.* We cannot have this fact stated with too great precision. I therefore copy it as told again in another passage, which Dr. Lardner renders thus from Sozomen: "I am not ignorant that the Gentiles are wont to say, that Constantine having put to death some of his relations, and particularly his son Crispus, and being sorry for what he had done, applied to SOPATER the philosopher, and he answering, that there were no expiations for such offences, the emperor then had recourse to the Christian bishops, who told him that by repentance and baptism he might be cleansed from all sin: with which doctrine he was well pleased, whereupon he became a Christian.—Lardner, vol. 4, p. 400. It was never on the score of being a superior code of morality that Christianity could compete with Paganism.

† In *Vita Constantine*, lib. 2, c. 18

‡ Ibid.

IV.—*The evidences of Christianity as they appeared to Constantine.*

Nothing can be more relevant to our great investigation, than a view of the evidences of Christianity as presented to the mind of the royal convert. Without passing any judgment on his character, or casting any reflections on Christianity from a consideration of the motives which were likely to induce *such a man* to become its convert, we are to remember that Constantine was not a disciple merely, but also a preacher of the Christian religion; and has left us the whole apparatus of argument, upon the strength of which, he not only became a Christian himself, but which he held sufficient to convince the reason, and command the faith of all other persons.

It is not possible that Christianity should ever have possessed evidence of any sort to which Constantine could have been a stranger.

It falls not within the measure of conceivable probabilities, that so clever a man as Constantine unquestionably was, setting himself in an assembly of all the distinguished Christian clergy of his age and empire, to deliver an oration expressly *on the evidences of the Christian religion*, should therein, have omitted all reference to its greatest and grandest testimonies, and have dwelt only on such as were equivocal or nugatory: neither will conceit itself endure the supposition, that Christianity can, since his day, have acquired any increase of evidence, so that it should be possible for us of later times to have other and better reasons for believing it than our forefathers had, or that that which was less certain at first, should become more certain afterwards.

An attempt to give the substance of so egregious a rhapsody of mystical jargon as his oration to the clergy, would be only less egregious than the rhapsody itself. Let the reader suppose himself to have got through the ten first sections of it; and here begins the eleventh of

Constantine's Oration to the Clergy.

“But I intend to prosecute the eternal decree and purpose of God, concerning the restoration of man's corrupted life, not ignorantly, as many do, neither trusting to opinion or conjecture. For, as the Father is the cause of the Son, so the Son is begotten of that cause who had existence before all things, as we have demonstrated. But how did

he descend to men on earth ? This, was out of his own determinate will, because, as the prophets had foretold, he had a general care of all men. For needs must the Workman have a care of his work. But when he came into the world, by assuming a bodily presence, and was to stay and converse some time on earth, for so the work of man's salvation required, he found a way of birth different from the common birth of men, for there was a conception without a marriage, a birth without a ; while a virgin was the mother of God. The divine essence, which before was only intelligible, was now become comprehensible : and incorporeal divinity was now united unto a material body. He was like the dove which flew out of Noah's ark, and rested at length on a virgin's bosom.* After his birth, the wonderful wisdom and providence of God protected him even from his cradle. The river Jordan was honoured with his baptism ;† he had the royal unction besides ; by his doctrine and divine power he wrought miracles, and healed incurable diseases. *Chap. 12.* We give thee all possible thanks, O Christ, our God and Saviour, the wisdom of the Father. *Chap. 15.* Moreover, we certainly know that the Son of God became a master to instruct the wise in the doctrine of salvation, and to invite all men to virtue, that he called unto him honest industrious men, and instructed them in modesty of life, and that he taught them faith and justice, which are repugnant to the envy of their adversary the devil, who desireth to ensnare and deceive the ignorant. He also forbiddeth lordship and dominion,‡ and sheweth that he came to help the meek and humble. This is heavenly and divine wisdom, that we should rather suffer injury than do any, and when necessary we should rather receive loss than do another any wrong :§ for, seeing it is a great fault to do any injury,|| not he that suffers it, but he that doth the injury, shall receive the greatest punishment.¶ This, in my opinion, is the firm basis of faith."

* I sincerely admire the dove's taste, and envy him his roost : but where did he find the virgin, when every body was drowned ? or where did Constantine find the story ?

† *Query* : Was he baptized to wash away his sins, or for what ?

‡ Compare this with the titles and honours which Constantine himself arrogated at that very time : and see another proof that from first to last, it was never understood that the *moral* precepts of Christ were so much as intended to be obeyed ; nobody sets them so much at defiance as the most zealous believers themselves.

§ *Rise* !

|| *Rise* !

¶ *Rise* ghosts of Fausta, Crispus and Licinius ! !

Chap. 18. "Here we must needs mention a certain testimony of Christ's divinity, fetched from those who were aliens and strangers from the faith. For those who contumeliously detract from him, if they will give credence to their own testimonies, may sufficiently understand thereby that he is both God and the Son of God. For the Erythræan Sibyl, who lived in the sixth age after the flood, being a priestess of Apollo, did yet, by the power of *divine inspiration*, prophecy of future matters that were to come to pass concerning God; and, by *the first letters*, which is called an acrostic, declared the history of Jesus. The acrostic is, *Jesus Christus, Dei Filius, Servator, Cruz.** And these things came into the Virgin's mind by *inspiration*, and by way of prophecy. And therefore I esteem her happy whom our Saviour did choose to be a prophetess, to divine and foretell of his providence towards us."

The royal preacher proceeds in the next chapter to reprove the incredulity of those who doubt the genuineness of this sublime doggerel.

"But the truth of the matter," he continues, "doth manifestly appear; for our writers have with great study so accurately compared the times, that none can suspect that this poem was made and come forth after Christ's coming; and, therefore, they are convicted of falsehood who blaze abroad, that these verses were not made by the Sibyl.

And then follows Chapter 20, entitled "Other verses of Virgil concerning Christ, in which under certain veils

* It is thus accurately versified into English by the translator Wye Saltonstall :

In that time, when the great Judge shall come,
Earth shall sweat; the Eternal King from's throne
Shall judge the world, and all that in it be,
Unrighteous men and righteous, shall God see
Seated on high with saints eternall-RE.

Compassed, which in the last age have been
Hence shall the earth grow desolate again
Regardless statues and gold shall be held vain
In greedy flames shall burn earth seas and skies,
Stand up again dead bodies shall, and rise,
That they may see all these with their eyes.

Cleansing the faithful in twelve fountains, He
Reign shall for ever unto eternitee,
Very God that he is, and our Saviour too,
Xrist that did suffer for us—and I hope that'll do!

(as poets use) this knotty mystery is set forth;" and to be sure, the fourth Bucolic of Virgil: commencing

Sicelides musæ paulo majora canamus ;

(than which, the power of imagination could hardly jump further away from all relation to any thing of the kind) is quoted as the ultimate proof and main evidence of the Christian revelation.

The amount of evidence then, for the Christian religion in the fourth century, as far as evidence influenced the mind of the most illustrious convert it could ever boast, was the Sibylline verses, now on all hands admitted to be a Christian forgery; and a mystical interpretation arbitrarily put on an eclogue of Virgil, which neither the poet himself, nor any rational man on earth, ever dreamed of charging with such an application. There is not one of all the thousand-and-one Arabian Nights' Entertainments, which with an equal licence of application might not be shown to be as relevant and prophetic as this.

Surely we had a right to expect from Constantine, that if evidence to the historical facts on which the gospel rests its claims, existed, he was the man who should have been acquainted with it;—this was the occasion on which it should have been brought forward. Nor are we to be put off with the old fox's apology—that *the grapes are sour*, and that Constantine's testimony would have reflected no honour on Christianity. Who, of all the whole human race could better have known the fact, or with greater propriety have given a certificate of it, had it been true that such a person as Jesus Christ had suffered an ignominious death under one of his predecessors in the Roman empery? Who, should have adduced the admission of Josephus, the testimony of Phlegon, the passage of Tacitus, nor these alone, if in his day they had existed, but ten thousand times their evidence, or (what would have been equipollent to that) should have produced the sign manual of Pontius Pilate, or the register itself of persons put to death under his viceroyalty, but Constantine, into whose hands they must have lineally descended? Constantine could not have been ignorant of their existence if any man on earth had known of it, and could not have failed of adducing them, had he known of them himself: and if he had known and adduced them, he would

have silenced the objections of millions of infidels: and, if infidelity be a damnable sin, would have saved millions from damnation? Surely it was any thing rather than such a palpable forgery as the Sibylline verses, or such infatuate irrelevancy as a heathen eclogue, that we should have a right to see assigned as a demonstration of the truth of the Christian religion! We wanted not allegories, nor mystifications, but the plain *matter-of-fact* evidence, which might have excused a man to himself as a rational being, in believing. Where is that evidence? Where the plausibility, the seeming, the shadow of an historical fact?—in heaven?—in hell?—in Brobdignag! 'Tis nowhere upon earth. Then rail at us, ye consecrated successors of Constantine! Persecute us, ye lawyers! Denounce us, ye hypocrites! Curse us all ye priests! Rail, rant, and roar for it:—but never talk of evidence!

EUSEBIUS, A. D. 315.

There is no name in Ecclesiastical History of equal importance with this: no character with whom it so vitally concerns, every rational man to be thoroughly acquainted, no individual of the whole human race, on whose single responsibility, ever hung so vast a weight of consequence. If Eusebius be to be numbered with wise and good men, the strength of his wisdom and the sincerity of his virtue, are sterling gold to the value of the Evidences of the Christian religion. If *he* be found wanting, just in so much wanting must be the credibility of so much of the Christian evidence as rests upon his testimony, and that is, all but the *all* of it. “Without Eusebius,” says the learned Tillemont, “we should scarce have had any knowledge of the history of the first ages of Christianity, or of the authors who wrote in that time. All the Greek authors of the fourth century who undertook to write the history of the church, have begun where Eusebius ended, as having nothing considerable to add to his labours.”

He was born, as is generally thought, at Cæsarea in Palestine, about the year 270. We have no account of his parents, or who were his instructors in early life; nor is there any thing certainly known of his family and relations. He is called *Pamphilus*, only in honour of his very particular friendship for the martyr of that name, who had been a presbyter of the church in which Euse-

bis succeeded Agassius as bishop, in the year 315. The name *Eusebius* is one of that order which learned men have generally claimed to themselves, and been allowed to hold, either as expressive of the characters they sustained, or to conceal the meanness and obscurity of their parentage, such as our Pelagius, for *Morgan*; Calvin, for *Chauvin*; Melancthon, for *Black earth*, &c. Eusebius, literally signifies, *one who is correctly religious*.

There have been several of this name, but none of the same age and character, with whom he is so likely to be confounded, as his contemporary, and *brother by courtesy*, Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia,—who calls our Eusebius his *Lord*. They were entire friends, and so intimate that they were both of the same opinion upon the Arian controversy as agitated in the council of Nice, which was held in the year 325, and in which our Eusebius bore a most distinguished part.

EUSEBIUS PAMPHILUS was *Bishop of Casarea* from the year 315 to the year 340, in which he died, in the 70th year of his age, thus playing his great part in life chiefly under the reigns of Constantine the Great and his son Constantius. He is the great ecclesiastical historian, with whom alone it is our concern to be especially acquainted. Ye little Eusebiuses hide your diminished heads!

His works bear testimony to a character of very great ability, of extraordinary diligence, and of an *esprit-du-corps*, or high-church passion that absorbed every other feeling, and would have induced him, as it did many others, to sacrifice not only life, but truth itself, to the paramount claims of the church's interests. St. Jerome gives a catalogue of his works, which consisted of 15 Books of *Evangelical Preparation*—as preparatives for such as were to learn the doctrine of the gospel. (So far was this great historian from apprehending that there was sufficient historical evidence to command any man's rational conviction, without a preparatory discipline—a breaking-in of the obstinacy of reason and common-sense, and “bringing down every high thought to the obedience of faith;”)—then followed his 20 books of *Evangelical Demonstration*, in which he proveth and confirmeth the doctrine of the New Testament with a confutation of the devil; then five books on the *Divine Apparition*;* ten

* Or *Theophany*, that is, “*the shining forth of God*,” a conceit, which conceit itself could hardly have dreamed of, as a definition of the life and adventures of the son of a frail girl of Nazareth—the hero of the gimlet, “O, it out-

books of *Ecclesiastical History*, by far the most important and valuable, as it is also the most defective of his writings—a general recital of *Chronical Canons* with an *Epitome* of the same; a treatise on the *Discrepancy of the Evangelists*.

Ten books of Commentary upon the prophet *Isaiah*.

A Commentary on the 150 *Psalms*.

Three books on the *Life* of his friend *Pamphilus*.

Six books in *Defence of Origen*.

Thirty books against *Porphyry*.

Eight books against *Hierocles*.

Four books of the *Life of Constantine*.

Books on *Martyrology*.

On *Fatal Destiny*.

Three books against *Marcellus*, who had been bishop of Ancyra in Galatia, and deposed upon suspicion of heresy about A. D. 320.

One book on *Topics*, and perhaps others innumerable, which nobody reads, nor would be the wiser for reading. His style, however, is in general good, and his Greek, very fluent and easy reading.

He has been accused by some of criminal time-serving, and of sacrificing to the gods to subserve some temporal purpose of his own, but not, indeed, on any satisfactory evidence of the fact. His *Life of Constantine*, however, is an incontrovertible demonstration against him; that he never let a regard for truth stand in his way to preferment, that he was a consummate sycophant, and that no man better understood, or more successfully practised, the courtly arts of standing well with *the powers that be*.

Petavius places Eusebius among Arians, and the learned Cave allows that “there are many unwary and dangerous expressions in his writings. He subscribed the Nicene creed, as he would have subscribed any other, though contrary to his convictions:” and to the sense of his writings both before and after that Council.”† On which, Dr. Lardner affectedly remarks, that “it is grievous to think, for better had it been that the bishops of that council had never met together, than that they should have

Herod’s Herod!” All other divines endeavour to subdue our reason,—the asserters of the humanity of Christ insult it.

* Like our own Archdeacon Paley, “he could not afford to have a conscience.” See his *Life* prefixed to his *Evidences of Christianity*.

† Like our Archbishop Magee, “he might have believed it in the lump, without believing it in the particular.”—See his *Evidence before the House of Lords*.

tempted and prevailed upon a Christian bishop, or any one else, to *prevaricate* and act against conscience."

"This author was a witness of the sufferings of the Christians," says Dr. Lardner, "in the early part of his life, and afterwards saw the splendor of the Church, under the first Christian Emperor. Like most other great men, he has met with good report and ill report; his learning, however, has been universally allowed." "It appears, (says Tillemont) from his works, that he had read all sorts of Greek authors, whether philosophers, historians, or divines, of Egypt, Phœnicia, Asia, Europe and Africa." "With a very extensive knowledge of literature (continues Dr. Lardner), he seems to have had the agreeable accomplishments of a *courtier*. He was both a bishop and a *man of the world*; a great author and a fine speaker. We plainly perceive from his writings, that through the whole course of his life, he was studious and diligent, insomuch that it is wonderful how he should have had leisure to write so many large and elaborate works of different kinds, beside the discharge of the duties of his function, and beside his attendance at Court, at Synods, and the solemnities of dedicating churches. He was acquainted with all the great and learned men of his time, and had access to the libraries of Jerusalem and Cæsarea; which advantage he improved to the utmost. Some may wish that he had not joined with the Arian leaders in the hard treatment that was given to Eustatius, Bishop of Antioch, Athanasius of Alexandria, and Marcellus of Ancyra. But it should be considered, that Christian bishops in general, after the conversion of Constantine, seem to have thought, that they had a right to depose and banish all ecclesiastics who did not agree with them upon the points of divinity controverted at that time. Finally though there may be some things exceptionable in his writings and conduct; his zeal for the Christian religion, his affection for the martyrs, his grateful respect for his friend Pamphilus—his diligence in collecting excellent materials, and in composing useful works for the benefit of mankind; his caution and scrupulousness in *not vouching for the truth** of Constantine's story of the apparition of the cross, as well as other things, fully

* But surely this lying by proxy, is but a more sneaking and cowardly way of lying: he knew that the falsehood was asserted, and profited by the falsehood. He lent his influence to it, and subscribed it with the consent of a criminal silence!

satisfy me, notwithstanding what some may say, that he was a good as well as a great man.”*

Du Pin says “that Eusebius seems to have been very disinterested, very sincere, a great lover of peace, of truth, and religion. Though he had close alliances with the enemies of Athanasius, he appears not to have been his enemy ; nor to have any great share in the quarrels of the bishops of that time. He was present at the councils where unjust things were transacted, but we do not discern that he showed signs of passion himself, or that he was the tool of other men’s passions. He was not the author of new creeds—he only aimed to reconcile and reunite parties. He did not abuse the interest he had with the Emperor, to raise himself, nor to ruin his enemies, as did Eusebius of Nicomedia, but he improved it for the benefit of the church.” Such is his character, as drawn by his advocates and friends, a character unfortunately pregnant with admissions of enough, and more than enough, to justify the charges of Baronius and others, sincere professors of the Christian faith, who have branded him as the great falsifier of ecclesiastical history, a wily sycophant, a consummate hypocrite, and a time-serving persecutor. Indeed, there is no fair evidence in any thing that appears in his writings, or is known of his life, to support our wish, for the honour of human nature, to believe that he himself believed the Christian religion. Had he done so, can we think that he would have deemed it necessary to promote that cause by forgery and imposture, by trickery and falsehood, as he has constantly endeavoured to do ?

“He had a great zeal for the Christian religion,” says Dr. Lardner, and so far, undoubtedly, he was in the right, nevertheless he should not have attempted to support it by weak and false arguments. “It is wonderful,” he adds, “that Eusebius should think Philo’s *Therapeutæ* were Christians, and that their ancient writings, should be our gospels and epistles.

“Agbarus’s letter to our Saviour, and our Saviour’s letter to Agbarus, copied at length in our author’s *Ecclesiastical History*, are much suspected by many learned men not to be genuine.

“If the testimony to Jesus as the Christ, had been from the beginning in Josephus’s works, it is strange it should never have been quoted by ancient apologists for Chris-

* Lardner, Vol. 2, p. 363.

tianity, and now in the beginning of the fourth century, be thought so important as to be quoted by our author in two of his works still remaining." That is to say, surely *Eusebius forged it himself!* for the purpose of quoting his own forgery. There was never an advocate of the Christian evidences yet, whose conscience would have opposed any hesitation to such services, in *so good a cause*.

"There is a work ascribed to Porphyry, quoted by Eusebius in his *Preparation and Demonstration*. If that work is not genuine (and I think it is not) it was a forgery of his own time, and the quoting it as he does, will be reckoned an instance of want of care or skill, or of candour and impartiality."

"Where Josephus says that Agrippa, casting his eyes upwards, saw an owl sitting upon a cord over his head; our ecclesiastical historian says, he saw an *angel*. I know not what good apology can be made for this."

So delicately does Dr. Lardner glance at the peccadilloes of the great Christian historian: to say nothing of his entirely passing over the altogether *Papish character* of the religion he professed; the masses said for the soul of Constantine, his own fulsome panegyric on that great monster of iniquity, and the innumerable instances of deceit and cunning which will be found by every shrewd student of his writings.

Eusebius held that Jesus Christ created the substance of the Holy Ghost, and ridiculously, or rather perhaps sarcastically, hints that miracles were still in vogue, even in his own time, only they were *little ones*.

His adducing, however, of the authority of the elders of the churches of Lyons and Vienne, without directly pledging his own authority, to obtain belief from whoever would believe the stories of the martyrdoms of the saints of those churches, and of some whose bodies were actually *found alive and uninjured in the stomachs of the wild beasts who had devoured them*,* is proof enough of his art in supplying miracles adapted to the meanest capacity, and a grand specimen of that peculiarly ecclesiastical finesse, in which Dr. Lardner himself is an exquisite proficient; the contriving to reap the effect of falsehood, without incurring its responsibilities, *lying by proxy*, and pushing what they never believed themselves into credence, as far as credence would follow, without committing themselves in any sufficiently honest

* Lardner's Credibility, Vol. 4, p. 91.

expression to enable a man to lay the blame of it directly at their own door. Thus also, the grave and solemn Tertullian assures us of a fact which he and all the orthodox of his time credited, that the body of a Christian which had been some time buried, *moved itself to one side of the grave to make room for another corpse which was going to be laid by it.** We have no less credible accounts of a *holy dog*, who used to slide along on his haunches to receive the sacrament, and to watch over the church-yard like a guardian angel, and when he saw any other dogs about to ease themselves upon the graves of the saints, he would instantly set on them, and teach them to go further. He was actually canonized by the Bishop of Rome, and many splendid and glorious miracles were wrought at the shrine of the Holy Dog, St. Towzer.†

Saint Augustin, in like manner, preached the Gospel to whole nations of men and women, who he assures us had no heads.—Query, could he mean any thing else than that, in believing the gospel, men and women have no need of heads. In a word,

Eusebius, like many other great men was drawn into the frightful vortex of superstition, and had no alternative but to whirl round in it, or sink. Like thousands of his order at this day, he both preached and wrote what he never believed himself, nor could believe. It is only when Religion shall be no more, that Hypocrisy shall be no more: as it is, there is but one rule in theological arithmetic—i. e. the greater saint, the greater liar!

CHAPTER XLIV.

TESTIMONY OF HERETICS.

THE only definition that will express the distinction between orthodoxy and heresy, is, that the orthodox party are those who have the upper hand, the heretics are those who have the misfortune to get ousted. All Dissenters are heretics. Should any order of those of the present day come to possess themselves of the ascendancy, (which

* Tertullian De An. c. 51, quoted by Evanson, p. 15.

† The relics of this truly Christian Dog are preserved in the parish church of San Andres, near Valladolid, to this day. His soul is with Jesus. We may laugh at this in England; but he would be a brave man who laughed at it in Spain. See *Catholic Miracles*, p. 48.

God avert) how absurd or monstrous soever their religious tenets might be, they would forthwith become perfectly orthodox; and the church, in its turn, losing hold of the great *primum-mobile* of divinity (its revenues and honours) might carry with it the selfsame doctrines which it now holds, into a state of the most deplorable and damnable heresy. "The learned have reckoned upwards of ninety different heresies which arose within the first three centuries; nor does it appear that even the most early and primitive preachers of Christianity, were able to keep the telling of the Christian story in their own hands, or to provide any sort of security for having it told in the same way.

St. Paul accuses St. Peter of wilfully corrupting the gospel of Christ,* and (whatever we may feel ourselves bound to think of himself) makes no mincing of the matter, in telling us, that the other apostles were "*false apostles, deceitful workers, dogs, and liars, and that they preached Christ out of envy and strife.*"†

In the epistles ascribed to John, and which are admitted to have been written some time before either of our gospels; it appears that there were persons professing the Christian faith, who considered that a belief that such a person as Jesus Christ had ever existed, was no part of that faith; and that he was denied to have had any real existence as a man, or to have come in the *flesh*, at a time when, if that fact could have been established, there would have been no occasion to make a virtue of any man's faith: the matter could at once have been settled for ever on a basis of certainty that would have prevented the power of the mind to conceive a doubt on the subject.

The very earliest Christian writings that have come down to us, are of a controversial character, and written in attempted refutation of heresies. These heresies must therefore have been of so much earlier date and prior prevalence; they could not have been considered of sufficient consequence to have called (as they seem to have done) for the entire devotion and enthusiastic zeal of the orthodox party to extirpate, or keep them under, if they had not acquired deep root, and become of serious notoriety—an inference which leads directly to the conclusion that they were of anterior origination to any date that has hitherto been ascribed to the gospel history. When the

* Galatians ii. 14; Acts xv. 39; Philippians iii. 2; Phil. i. 15, &c.

† 1 John iv. 3.

simple fact of the existence of such a man as Jesus Christ is questioned, it is usual for the modern advocates of Christianity to shelter themselves from all contemplation of the historical difficulties of the case, by assuming his existence to be incontrovertible, and that nothing short of idiocy of understanding, or an intention to irritate and annoy, rather than either to seek or to communicate information, could prompt any man to moot a doubt on the subject; nor is it in the power of language to exceed the airs of insolence and domination which even our Unitarian theologians assume, to cloak over their inability to give satisfaction on this, the simplest and prime position of the case, by taking it for granted, forsooth, that none but reckless desperates, or downright fools,* could ever have held the human existence of Christ as problematical. We might, say they, as well affect to deny the existence of such an individual as Alexander the Great, or of Napoleon Bonaparte, and so set at defiance the evidence of all facts but such as our senses have attested. It being quite forgotten that the existence of Alexander and Napoleon was not miraculous, and that there never was on earth one other real personage whose existence as a real personage was denied and disclaimed even as soon as ever it was asserted, as was the case with respect to the assumed personality of Christ. But the only common character that runs through the whole body of heretical evidence, is that they one and all, from first to last, deny the existence of Jesus Christ as a man, and professing their faith in him as a God and Saviour, yet uniformly and consistently hold the whole story of his life and actions to be allegorical. "The greatest part of the *Gnostics* (taking that name as the most general one for all the heretics of the three first centuries) denied that Christ was clothed with a *real* body, or that he suffered really."†

Tertullian speaks of only two heresies, that existed in the time of the Apostles, i. e. the *Docetæ*, so called from the Greek *δοκεῖν* opinion, suspicion, appearance merely, as expressive of their opinion that Christ had existed in appearance only, and not in reality; and the *Ebionites*, so called from the Hebrew word *abionim*, in expression of their poverty, ignorance, and vulgarity.‡ Docetism, says

* Let any man only read the Preface to the Rev. J. R. Beard's *Historical Evidences of Christianity Unassailable*, and imagine if he can, how either God or Pope could ever have thundered with more audacious Godhead.

† Mosheim, Vol. 1, p. 136.

‡ Quoted in Lardner, vol. 4, p. 512.

Dr. Lardner, “seems to have derived its origin from the Platonic philosophy. For the followers of this opinion were principally among the higher classes of men, and were chiefly those who had been converted from heathenism to Christianity.”* As far then, as such a question admits of proof, this is absolute proof that no such a person as Jesus Christ ever existed,—“Blow winds, and crack your cheeks!”

HERETICS WHO DENIED CHRIST'S HUMANITY.

Within the immediate year of the alleged crucifixion of Christ, or sooner than any other account of the matter could have been made known, it was publicly taught, that instead of having been miraculously born, and having passed through the impotence of infancy, boyhood, and adolescence, he had descended on the banks of the Jordan in the form of perfect manhood, that he had imposed on the senses of his enemies, and of his disciples, and that the ministers of Pilate had wasted their impotent rage on an airy phantom.† Cotelierius has a strong passage to this effect, that “it would be as it were to deny that the sun shines at mid-day, to question the fact that this was really the first way in which the gospel story was related:” “While the apostles were yet on earth, nay, while the blood of Christ was still recent on Mount Calvary, the body of Christ was asserted to be a mere phantasm”‡

The heretics in regular succession from Simon Magus, so considerable a hero in the Acts of the Apostles, downwards—as Menander, Marcion, Valentine, Basilides, Bardesanes, Cerdon, Manes, Leucius, Faustus,—vehemently denied the humanity of Christ.

CERDON.

Though Dr. Lardner thinks the testimony of Cerdon of sufficient respectability to assist the claims of the New Testament, and concludes that Cerdon was a Christian, and received the books of the New Testament as other Christians did; yet, taking that book as his guide, he established his sect at Rome, where he taught, (the New

* Quoted in Lardner, vol. 4, p. 628.

† Syntagma, p. 101.

‡ Apostolis adhuc in sæculo superstitionibus apud Judæam Christi sanguine recente, et PHANTASMA corpus Domini asserebatur.—*Cotel. Patres Apostol.* tom. 2, p. 24.

Testament in his understanding of it containing nothing to the contrary), that “our Saviour Jesus Christ was not born of a virgin, nor did appear at all in the flesh, nor had he descended from heaven; but that he was seen by men only *putatively*, that is, they *fancied* they saw him, but did not see him in reality, for he was only a *shadow*, and *seemed* to suffer, but in reality did not suffer at all.”

MARCION OF PONTUS, A. D. 127.

The successor of Cerdon, and himself the son of the orthodox bishop of that city; whose opinions, according to the testimony of his adversary Epiphanius, prevailed, and in his own day still subsisted throughout Italy, Egypt, Palestine, Arabia, and Syria, was so far from believing that our Saviour was born of a virgin, that he did not allow that he had ever been born at all. He maintained that the son of God took the exterior form of a man, and *appeared* as a man, but without being born, or gradually growing up to the full stature of a man, he had showed himself at once in Galilee, completely equipped for his divine mission, and that he immediately assumed the character of a Saviour.

Dr. Lardner instructs us that the *Marcionites* (the followers of the opinions of Marcion) believed the miracles of Christ; they moreover allowed the truth of the miraculous earthquake and darkness at the crucifixion; they acknowledged his having had twelve disciples, and that one of them was a traitor. “It is evident that these persons were in general strictly virtuous, that they dreaded sin as the greatest evil, and had such a real regard for Christ as to undergo martyrdom rather than offer incense to idols.” (605.) This was at least so much more than Origen, with all his orthodoxy, would do. If we deny these men to have been Christians, to whom shall we confine that designation? It cannot be disputed that the Gospel according to St. Mark does admit of a *Marcionite* reading; nor did these primitive dissenters entirely reject Luke’s Gospel, though in their copy of that Gospel the verse 39 of its 24th chapter* contained the little particle NOT, where our copies have omitted it—an omission

* Luke xxiv. 39. “Handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me have.” The Marcionite reading was,—&c. “a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see that I have NOT.”—*Ψηλαφησατε με και ιδετε οτι πνευμα σαρκος, και οστεα ουκ εχει, καθως εμε θεωρειτε ουκ εχοντα.*

which, at the first blush, seems to make a trifling difference. Tertullian, in his way, is indecently eloquent in describing the tenets which the Marcionites held with respect to the person of Christ.*

LEUCIUS, A. D. 143.

Or Lucian, for he had many names—Lucanus, Lucius, Leicius, Lentitius, Leontius, Seleucius, Charnius, Leonides, and even Nexocharides, which mean all one and the same person, was a distinguished Christian Docete, and one of the most eminent forgers of sacred legends of the second century. He is charged with being the forger of the Gospel of Nicodemus, and was the author of the forged acts or journeyings of the Apostles. In the commentaries which go under the name of Clement of Alexandria, a passage from this work is quoted, which says that the Apostle John, “attempting to touch the body of Christ, perceived no hardness of the flesh, and met with no resistance from it, but thrust his hand into the inner part.” A sense which, whatever sense or nonsense there be in it, is at least kept in countenance by St. Luke’s Gospel (if this Lucius and our Luke are not one and the same person), where Luke tells us of Christ’s *vanishing away*, which no *body* could do (Chap. 24, v. 31),† and then, without any *entrée*, standing again (*à la vampire*) in the midst of them (v. 36.) Say we nothing of the corroboration from St. John’s Gospel, where he bids Thomas thrust his hand into his side, which no *body* could have endured (John xx. 27.), but refused to let the lady Magdalene so much as touch him, which no body could have had any objection to. (v. 17.) We have no reason, however, to think this Leucius any the soryer a Christian because Pope Gelasius has condemned him and his writings, declaring that all his writings are apochryphal, and he himself a disciple of the devil.

APELLES, A. D. 160,

That is, about twenty years after the establishment of Marcion, whose disciple he had been, made a schism from

* Non novem mensium cruciata deliberatus, non subita dolorum concussione per corporis cloacam effusus in terram, nec molestus uberibus diu infans, vix puer, tarde homo sed de cœlo expositus, semel grandis, semel totus, statim Christus, Spiritus et Virtus et Deus tantum.—*Adv. Marcion*, 601.

† Καὶ αὐτὸς ἀπαρτὸς ἑγέρτο ἀπ’ αὐτῶν.

the Marcionite church ; and thus we trace by what degrees the Docetian doctrines were brought into a nearer conformity to the present type of Christianity, and what was originally romance began to assume a certain resemblance to history.

APELLES renounced the doctrine of *Docetism*, and maintained that Christ was not an appearance only, but had flesh really, though not derived from the Virgin Mary, for as he descended from the supercelestial places to this earth, he collected to himself a body out of the four elements. Having thus formed to himself a corporeity, he really appeared in this world, and taught men the knowledge of heavenly things. Apelles taught that Jesus was really crucified, and afterwards showed that very flesh in which he suffered, to his disciples ; but that afterwards, as he ascended, he returned the body which he had borrowed back again to the elements, and so completed his anabasis, and sat down at the right hand of God, without any body at all. According to this Father, however, Christ was *not* born, nor was his body like ours ; for though it was real and solid, it consisted of aerial and etherial particles, not of such gross matter as our frail bodies are composed of. —It was a sort of amber.

FAUSTUS,

The most learned and intelligent Manichean, whom we have elsewhere quoted as directly charging the orthodox party with having egregiously falsified the gospels,* (a charge which the orthodox only answer, by retorting it again upon the heretics,) in his interrogative style, thus expresses himself—“†Do you receive the gospel ? (ask ye) Undoubtedly I do ! Why then, you also admit that Christ was born ?—Not so ; for it by no means follows, that in believing the gospel, I should therefore believe that Christ was born ! Do you not then think that he was of the Virgin Mary ? *Manes* hath said, ‘Far be it that I should ever own that our Lord Jesus Christ

* * * * * &c.

* See pp. 65, 66, and 114, in this *DIEGESIS*.

† Accipis evangelium ? Et maxime. Proinde ergo et natum accipis Christum ? Non ita est. Neque enim sequitur ut si evangelium accipio, idcirco et natum accipiam Christum. Ergo non putas eum ex Maria Virgine esse ? *Manes* dixit, Absit ut Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum per naturalia pudenda mulieris descendisse confitear.—*Lardner, ita*, vol. 4, p. 20.

HERETICS WHO DENIED CHRIST'S DIVINITY.

Down the whole stream of time, to the present day, there has been a long succession of heretics, whose tenets were the diametrical reverse of these of the more early Christians. From Artemon, Theodotus, Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, Marcellus, Photinus, &c. we inherit the curse of the *Unitarian schism*, which denies the *divinity*, as strenuously, as the earlier Fathers had denied the *humanity* of Christ. The orthodox have devised a scheme that seems to have been intended to bring both parties together, or to enable them to turn their arms either against the one faction or the other, as political interests might prompt, or need require; and the union of the two natures—perfect God and perfect man—is now the orthodox divinity. It is, I suppose, upon inference from these difficulties, which never could have been started with respect to any being who had ever really existed; or which being started, could have been settled at once and for ever, by the production of any one municipal certificate, or independent historical testimony, that Mr. Volney, Mr. Carlile, and other persons who do not exactly deserve to be considered as idiots, have ventured to deny that any such person as Jesus ever existed.

It is of essential consequence to be borne in view, that in order of time,

Those who denied the *humanity* of Christ were the first class of professing Christians, and not only first in order of time, but in dignity of character, in intelligence, and in moral influence.

Those who denied the *divinity*, were the second, and in every sense a less philosophical and less important body.

The junction of the two in the mongrel scheme of modern orthodoxy, seems to have been completed in the *articles of peace* drawn up for the Council of Nice, A. D. 325.

The deniers of the humanity of Christ, or, in a word, professing Christians, who denied that any such a man as Jesus Christ ever existed at all, but who took the name Jesus Christ to signify only an abstraction, or *prosopopœia*, the *principle of Reason* personified; and who understood the whole gospel story to be a sublime allegory, or emblematical exhibition of the sufferings and persecutions which the *divine principle of reason*, may be supposed to undergo, ere it could establish its *heavenly kingdom* over the under-

standings and affections of men;—these were the first, and (it is no dishonour to Christianity to pronounce them) the best and most rational Christians. Many such fell victims to the sincerity of their faith, not, indeed, as is monstrously pretended by the persecuting genius of Paganism, but by the remorseless savageness of the infatuated idiots, who, having once been interested in the allegorical fiction, like our country louts or Unitarian stolid of the present day, would needs have it that it must *all be true*, and were ready to tear any one to pieces who attempted to deprive them of the agreeable delusion.

The allegorical sense may, by any unsophisticated mind, be still traced; and, by changing the name *Jesus* throughout for that of *Reason*, the New Testament will acquire a character of comparative dignity and consistency, which without that clue to the interpretation of it, would be sought for in vain.

HERETICS WHO DENIED CHRIST'S CRUCIFIXION.

Not only among the Apostles, but by those who were called Apostles themselves, was the *reality* of the crucifixion steadily denied. In the gospel of the Apostle Barnabas, of which there is extant an Italian translation written in 1470, or in 1480, which Toland* himself saw, and which was sold by Cramer to Prince Eugene, it is explicitly asserted, that “Jesus Christ *was not crucified*, but that he was taken up into the third heavens by the ministry of four angels, Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, and Uriel; that he should not die till the very end of the world, and that it was Judas Iscariot, who was crucified in his stead.”

This account of the matter entirely squares with the account which we have of the bitter and unappeaseable quarrel which took place between Paul and Barnabas, in the Acts of the Apostles,† without any satisfactory account of the ground of that quarrel; as well as with the fact that Paul seems always to have preferred imposing his gospel on the ignorant and credulous vulgar, and lays such a significant emphasis on the distinction that *he* preached “Jesus Christ, and *Him crucified*,” as if in marked op-

* Toland's *Nazarenes*, Letter I. Chap. 5, p. 17.

† Acts xv. 39, “*And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other.*” We never hear of their being reconciled again—but that is not extraordinary—no beast in nature is so implacable as an offended saint.

position to his former patron, Barnabas, who preached Jesus Christ, but *not* crucified.

The *Basilidians*, in the very beginning of Christianity, in like manner denied that Christ was crucified, and asserted that it was Simon of Cyrene, who was crucified in his place: which account of the matter stood its ground from the first to the seventh century, and was the form in which Christianity presented itself to the mind of Mahomet, who, after instructing us how the Virgin Mary conceived by smelling a rose, tells us, that “*the Jews devised a stratagem against him, but God devised a stratagem against them, and God is the best deviser of stratagems.*” “The malice of his enemies aspersed his reputation, and conspired against his life, but their intention only was guilty, a phantom or a criminal was substituted on the cross, and the innocent Jesus was translated into the seventh heaven.”*

So much for the evidence of the Crucifixion of Christ!

HERETICS WHO DENIED CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

In like manner, we have a long list of sincerely-professing Christians down from the earliest times, who denied the resurrection of Christ.

Theodoret informs us of Cerinthus, who was contemporary with the Apostle John and his followers, and that he held and taught that Christ† suffered and was crucified, but that he did not rise from the tomb: but that he *will* rise when there shall be a general resurrection. Philaster says of him‡ that he taught that men should be circumcised, and observe the Sabbath, and that Christ was not *yet* risen from the dead, only he announces that he will rise.

Had the Christ of the Gospels been really the founder of the Christian religion, certainly it would be incumbent on all Christians to be circumcised as he was, and to observe that *Jewish* law only, which he observed, and which he was so far from abrogating, that he declared that “heaven and earth should pass away ere one jot or one tittle of that law,” should be dispensed with.—Matt. v. 18. Our modern religionists are Paulites: The Jews alone are the followers of the example and religion of Jesus.

* See the Koran, C. iii. v. 53, and C. iv. v. 156, of Maracci's edition.

† Χριστον πεπονθεναι και εσταυρωσθαι : μηπω διεγρηγορει : μελλειν δε ανιστασθαι οτον η καθολου γενηται νεκρων αναστασις.

‡ Docet autem circumcidi et sabbatizare et Christum nondum resurrectum a mortuis sed, resurrecturum annunciat.—Lardner, vol. 4, p. 368.

The Cerinthians,
The Valentinians,
The Markosians,
The Cerdonians,
The Marcionites,
The Bardisanites,
The Origenists,
The Hierakites,
The Manichees,

Stand in the long and never interrupted succession of Christians who denied the Resurrection of Christ.

I have heard of one of the most popular and distinguished preachers among the Unitarians, who, upon being homely pressed with the question as to *where he believed the body of Jesus Christ might at this moment be*, pointed with his finger to the turf, and looked vastly droll, in intimation of his concurrence in that orthodox belief, so sublimely expressed in the epitaphs we stumble on in Deptford church-yard: against which, I believe there never was an infidel yet, who could bring a rational objection.

“Go home, dear friends, dry up your tears,
Here we shall lie, till Christ appears,
And when he comes we hope to have
A joyful rising from the grave.”

As the whole amount of the internal evidence for the alleged fact of the Gospel, it may then be fairly stated, that in contravention of the clear understanding of the mystical nature of the whole Mythos, which those who bear the brand of heresy have given us—while a thousand expressions in the writings of the orthodox themselves confirm that understanding: not so much as any two continuous sentences can be adduced from any pen that wrote within a hundred years of the supposed death and resurrection of Christ, which are such as any writer whatever would have written, had he himself believed that such events had really occurred.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE WHOLE OF THE EXTERNAL EVIDENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

PALEY, in his *Horæ Paulinæ*, with that consummate ingenuity which might be expected from a clergyman who *could not afford to have a conscience*, has contrived to substitute a very plausible and indeed convincing evidence of the existence and character of Paul of Tarsus, for a

presumptive evidence of the truth of Christianity. The instances of evidently-undesigned coincidence between the Epistles of Paul, and the history of him contained in the Acts of the Apostles, are indeed irrefragible: and make out the conclusion to the satisfaction of every fair inquirer, that neither those epistles, nor that part of the Acts of the Apostles are suppositious. The hero of the one is unquestionably the epistoler of the other; both writings are therefore genuine to the full extent of every thing that they purport to be, neither are the Epistles forged, nor is the history, *as far as it relates to St. Paul*, other than a faithful and a fair account of a person who really existed, and acted the part therein ascribed to him.

TESTIMONY OF LUCIAN.

Lucian, in his dialogue entitled *Philopatris*, speaks of a Galilean with a bald forehead and a long nose, who was carried, (or rather pretended that he had been carried) to the third heaven, and speaks of his hearers as a set of tatterdemalions almost naked, with fierce looks, and the gait of madmen, who moan and make contortions; swearing by the son who was begotten by the father; predicting a thousand misfortunes to the empire, and cursing the Emperor. I have far greater pleasure in quoting the unexceptionable

TESTIMONY OF LONGINUS.

Longinus Dionysius Cassius, who had been Secretary to Zenobia Queen of Palmyra, and died A. D. 273, in his enumeration of the most distinguished characters of Greece; after naming Demosthenes, Lysias, Æschines, Aristides, and others, concludes, and “add to these Paul of Tarsus, whom I consider to be the first setter-forth of an unproved doctrine.”*

This testimony is, indeed, very late in time, and extends a very little way; but let it avail as much as it may avail, there can be no doubt (whether Christianity be received or rejected) that Paul was a most distinguished and conspicuous metaphysician, who lived and wrote about the time usually assigned, and that those Epistles which go under his name in the New Testament, are in good faith, (and even with less alteration than many other writings of equal antiquity have undergone) such as he either penned or dictated. Should any sincere and upright believer in

* *Προς τουτους Παυλος ο Ταρσευς ουτινα και πρωτον φημι προϊσταμενον δογματι αναποδεικτον.*—*Eur. Magazine.*

the Christian religion, instead of reviling and insulting the author of this work, or going about to increase and extend the horrors of that unjust imprisonment, of which this work has been the chief solace—set himself ably and conscientiously to the business of showing that from an admission of the genuineness and authenticity of St. Paul's Epistles, and of the reality of the character and part ascribed to him in the Acts of the Apostles, (always excepting the miraculous) the existence of Jesus Christ as a man, and the general credibility of the gospel history would follow ; he would deserve well of the Christian community, and of all men who wish to see truth triumphant over prejudice, ignorance, and error.

THE TESTIMONY OF PHLEGON.

This has long ago been given up as an egregious monkish forgery, no longer tenable ; nor indeed is it ever adduced by our more modern and rational divines. Mr. Gibbon, in his caustic and expressive style, says, “the celebrated passage of Phlegon is now *wisely* abandoned ;”^{*} but as he has not quoted it, and I find it, standing its ground in the celebrated Dr. Clarke's Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, I have thought it worthy of transcription in this place. This it is,

“† In the fourth year of the two hundred and second Olympiad, there was an eclipse of the sun greater than any ever known before ; and it was night at the sixth hour of the day, so that even the stars appeared, and there was a great earthquake in Bythinia, that overthrew several houses in Nice.”

THE PASSAGE OF MACROBIUS.

“When Augustus had heard that among the children in Syria, whom Herod, King of the Jews, had ordered to be slain under two years of age, his own son was also killed, he remarked that it was better to be Herod's hog than his son.”[‡]

* Decline and Fall, chap. 15, *ad calcem*.

† Τεταρτῶ δ' ἐστὶ τῆς διακοσιοστῆς δευτέρας οὐλυμπιάδας, ἐγένετο ἐκλείψεις ἡλίου, μεγίστη τῶν ἐγνωρισμένων προτέρων, καὶ νύξ ὥρα ἑκτη τῆς ἡμέρας ἐγένετο ὥστε καὶ ἀστέρων ἐν οὐρανῷ φανῆναι, καὶ σεισμός.—κ. τ. λ.

‡ Cum audisset (Augustus) inter pueros quos in Syria, Herodes rex Judæorum intra bimatum jussit interfici, filium quoque ejus occisum, ait, “Melius est Herodis percarn esse quam filium.”—*Macrobius*, lib. 2. c. 4.—*Clarke* 355.

There is no occasion to be prolix in comment upon a passage, which though urged by Dr. Clarke, and some of our earlier Christian evidence writers, is regarded generally by Christians themselves as somewhat below the line of respectability. It is not adduced by Eusebius who is ridiculously diffuse on the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem,* and who would have made much of it, had it been known to him. The probability is, that Macrobius might have recorded, such a *saying* of Augustus, with respect to some unnatural father, or even of Herod himself, whose cruelty to his own family was but little inferior to that of the evangelical Constantine; and some of the Monkish Radiurges,† or dexterously-forging scribes, might have thought it a good exploit, to fit it with the occasion.

The whole passage of St. Matthew's Gospel, which relates the story of the slaughter of the innocents, is marked in the improved version of the New Testament, as of *doubtful authority*; and is included among *some of the facts*, of which the Unitarian editors of that version, say in their note, that they *have a fabulous appearance*.

I cannot possibly treat this delicate subject with greater delicacy, than by possessing my readers of the judgment which a learned, intelligent, and sincere believer in the Christian religion, has passed upon it.

“Josephus and the Roman historians give us particular accounts of the character of this Jewish king, who received his sovereign authority from the Roman Emperor, and inform us of other acts of cruelty which he was guilty of in his own family; but of this infamous inhuman butchery, which to this day remains unparralleled in the annals of tyranny, they are entirely silent. Under such circumstances, if my eternal happiness depended upon it, I could not believe it true. But though I readily exclaim with Horace, *non ego*,‡ I cannot add, as he does, *credat Judæus Apella*;§ for I am confident, there is no Jew that reads this chapter, who does not laugh at the ignorant credulity of those professed Christians,|| who receive such gross, palpable falsehoods for the inspired word of God, and lay the foundation of their religion upon such incredible fictions as these.”¶

* Eccles. Hist. lib. 1, c. 9.

† Ραδιουργοί.

‡ Not I!

§ Let the Jew Apelles believe!

|| Surely this professed Christian had not the fear of OAKHAM before his eyes.

¶ Reverend Edward Evanson's Dissonance of the Gospels. Ed Ipswich 1792, p. 126.

PUBLIUS LENTULUS.

It was a known custom of government, that whatever of moment occurred in any province of the empire, should be transmitted in due report from the provincial authorities to the knowledge of the Roman Emperor and the Senate. Of this, the correspondence of the younger Pliny and the emperor Trajan, as well as the natural and obvious necessity of the thing, is proof unquestionable.

Upon the notoriety of this custom, and the self-evident inference, that it was impossible that the Procurator or representative of the Roman authority in Judea, should have omitted to make a report of the existence and miracles of Jesus Christ ; a few years ago, the great libraries of England, France, Italy, and Germany, pretended to possess their several authentic copies of the epistle, in which *Publius Lentulus*, the supposed predecessor of Pontius Pilate in the Province of Judea, was believed to have written to the Roman Senate a most particular description of the person of Jesus Christ.*

It was first found in the *History of Christ*, as written in Persic by Jeremy or Hieronymus Xavier.

In front of certain parchment manuscripts of the gospels, written three hundred and twenty-five years ago, preserved in the library at Jena, there is still preserved, the following inscription :

“ In the time of Octavius Cæsar, Publius Lentulus, proconsul in the parts of Judæa and (the territory) of Herod the King, is said to have written this epistle to the Roman Senators, which was afterwards found by Eutropius in the annals of the Romans.”† This commentitious epistle was formerly edited among orthodox writings, under the title,—

“ Lentulus, Prefect of Jerusalem, to the Senate and people of Rome, greeting ;

“ †At this time, there hath appeared, and still lives, a

* All our pictures of the handsome Jew, present the closest family likeness to the Indian Krishna, and the Greek and Roman Apollo. Had the Jewish text been respected, he would rather have been exhibited as hideously ugly : “ *his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.*”—Isaiah lii. 14. But this would have spoiled the ornaments of the church as well as of the theatre, and been fatal to the faith of the fair sex.—Who could have believed in an ugly son of God ?

† *Temporibus Octaviani Cæsaris, Publius Lentulus Procos. in partibus Judæa, et Herodis Regis, Senatoribus Romanis, hanc epistolam scripsisse fertur, quæ postea ab Eutropio reperta est in annalibus Romanorum.*—*Fabricii Cod. Apoc.* tom. 1, p. 302.

‡ *Hoc tempore vir apparuit, et adhuc vivit vir præditus potentia magna,*

man endued with great powers, whose name is Jesus Christ. Men say that he is a mighty prophet ; his disciples call him the Son of God. He restores the dead to life, and heals the sick from all sorts of ailments and diseases. He is a man of stature, proportionably tall, and his cast of countenance has a certain severity in it, so full of effect, as to induce beholders to love, and yet still to fear him. His hair is of the colour of wine, as far as to the bottom of his ears, without *radiation*, and straight ; and from the lower part of his ears, it is curled, down to his shoulders, and bright, and hangs downwards from his shoulders ; at the top of his head it is parted after the fashion of the Nazarines. His forehead is smooth and clean, and his face without a pimple, adorned by a certain temperate redness ; his countenance gentlemanlike and agreeable, his nose and mouth nothing amiss ; his beard thick, and divided into two bunches, of the same colour as his hair ; his eyes *blue*, and uncommonly bright. In reproving and rebuking he is formidable ; in teaching and exhorting, of a bland and agreeable tongue. He has a wonderful grace of person united with seriousness. No one hath ever seen him smile, but weeping indeed they have. He hath a lengthened stature of body ; his hands are straight and turned up, his arms are delectable ; in speaking, deliberate and slow, and sparing of his conversation ;—the most beautiful of countenance among the sons of men.”

THE VERONICA HANDKERCHIEF

Would not deserve a consideration among the external evidences of Christianity, had it not been consecrated by the serious belief and earnest devotion of the largest body

nomen ejus Jesus Christus : Homines eum prophetam potentem dicunt, discipuli ejus, filium Dei vocant. Mortuos vivificat, et ægros ab omnis generis ægitudinibus et morbis sanat. Vir est attæ staturæ proportionate, et conspectus vultus ejus cum severitate, et plenus efficacia, ut spectatores amare eum possint et rursus timere. Pili capitis ejus, vinei coloris usque ad fundamentum aurium, sine *radiatione* et erecti, et a fundamento aurium usque ad humeros contorti, ac lucidi, et ab humeris deorsum pendentes, bifido vertice dispositi in morem Nazaræorum. Frons plana et pura, facies ejus sine macula quam rubor quidam temperatus ornat. Aspectus ejus ingenuus et gratus. Nasus et os ejus nullo modo reprehensibilia. Barba ejus multa, et colore pilorum capitis bifurcata : Oculi ejus cærulei et extreme lucidi. In reprehendendo et objurgando formidibilis, in docendo et exhortando blandæ linguæ et amabilis. Gratia miranda vultus, cum gravitate. Vel semel eum ridentem nemo vidit, sed flentem imo. Protracta statura corporis, manus ejus rectæ, et erectæ, brachia ejus delectabilia. In loquendo ponderans et gravis, et parcus loquela. Pulcherrimus vultu inter homines sator.”

and most ancient sect of professed Christians. I make no remark on the story, but copy it as I find it, in a note of the editor on the text of Eusebius, where he relates the story of the correspondence of Christ and Abgarus.* “How that Abgarus, governor of Edessa, sent his letter unto Jesus, and withal a certain painter, who might view him well, and bring unto him back again the lively picture of Jesus. But the painter not being able, for the glorious brightness of his gracious countenance, to look at him so steadily as to catch his likeness, our Saviour himself took an handkerchief, and laid it on his divine and lovely face, and by wiping of his face, his picture became impressed on the handkerchief, the which he sent to Abgarus.”

This story the translator gives with severe censure from the historian Nicephorus, and perhaps it might deserve no less; but that the impartial principle of this *DIEGESIS*, forbids our treating any subject with levity or indifference, that has had power to engage the impassioned affections and earnest devotions of so numerous and respectable a portion of the Christian community.

I copy from Blount's Philostratus, the annexed prayer, extracted from a Roman Catholic Liturgy, or manual of true piety :

The Prayer to Veronica.†

“Hail Holy Face impressed on cloth ! Purge us from every spot of vice, and join us to the society of the blessed ; O blessed Figure !”

THE TESTIMONY OF PILATE.

In the same spirit of pious fraud, the Christian world had for ages been led to believe that the governor Pontius Pilate had sent to the emperor Tiberius, an account of the crucifixion of Christ ; which indeed, had such a person ever existed, and such an event taken place, it is next to impossible to conceive that he should not have done. But, alas, this testimony too, has been swept away by the terrible besom of rational criticism ; and is now left to lie with that of Lentulus, the Veronica handkerchief, and the Sibylline Oracles : among the number of

* Euseb. Eccles. Hist. lib. 1, c. 14.

† The name *Veronica*, occurs in the Gospel of Nicodemus, as that of the lady who came behind Jesus and touched the hem of his garment. “*Veronica, ista videter literis transpositis, nata ex vocabulis duobus, vera icon. Certum est, imaginem ipsam Christi, a scriptoribus non paucis, dici Veronicam.*”—*Fab. tom. 1, p. 252.*

apocryphal cheats and impositions, which served the purpose of imposing on generations which were more easily imposed on, but are rejected with disdain and disgust by the increasing scepticism even of the most orthodox believers.

Our immediate grandfathers, were required to believe that Pontius Pilate informed the emperor of the unjust sentence of death which he had pronounced against an innocent, and as it appeared, a divine person; and that without acquiring the merit of martyrdom, he exposed himself to the danger of it, that Tiberius, who avowed his contempt for all religion, immediately conceived the design of placing the Jewish Messiah among the Gods of Rome; that his servile senate ventured to disobey the commands of their master; that Tiberius, instead of resenting their refusal, contented himself with protecting the Christians from the severity of the laws, many years before there were any laws in existence that could operate against them; and lastly, that the memory of this extraordinary transaction was preserved in the most public and authentic records, only those public and authentic records were *never seen nor heard of* by any of the persons to whose keeping they were entrusted, escaped the knowledge and research of the historians of Greece and Rome, and were only visible to the eyes of an African priest, who composed his apology one hundred and sixty years after the death of Tiberius.

This testimony was first asserted by that brave assertor, Justin Martyr; and as a snowball loses nothing by rolling, has received successive accretions in passing through the hands of Tertullian, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, and Orosius, till the warm handling of modern criticism has thawed away its unsubstantial fabric.

The faith of that great father of pious frauds, Eusebius, upon this testimony glows into a fervour of assurance, which on any other subject would look like impudence. For after having assured us on the testimony of Tertullian, that Tiberius was so convinced by the account that Pilate had sent him, of the resurrection of Christ, that he threatens *death* to any person who should but bring an accusation against the Christians, when certainly there were no Christians; and takes upon himself to inform us, that * "it was the divine providence, that by way

* Τῆς θρανίᾳ προνοίας κατ' οἰκονομίαν τὰτ' αὐτῷ πρὸς τὴν βαλλομένης, ὡς αὐτὸν ἀπαράδοξιτος ἀρχὴς ἔχων εὐαγγελίῳ λόγος πανταχοῦ γῆς διαδρομοί, lib. 2. c. 2.

of management, injected this thought into the Emperor's mind, in order, that the word of the gospel, having got a fair starting, might run throughout the whole world without opposition."

The probability of the supposed occasion, was sure to bid for its ample supply of forgeries to be fastened upon it :—and as Ovid, having once got the names and circumstances of either real or imaginary personages, given as *data*, has invented imaginary speeches and epistles suitable for such personages, under such circumstances to have delivered, so Christian piety has supplied us with stores of epistles—not which Pilate wrote, but which he may be supposed to have written; which for all the authentication required in matters of faith, is authentication enough. None but unbelievers would wish for more.

John Albert Fabricius, has in his *Codex Apocryphus*, noticed five of these suppositious epistles—of which one, called the *Anaphora* or Relation of Pilate to Tiberius is in Greek, and of considerable length, as intended perhaps, if it had told, to pass for a gospel: the others, short and in Latin. I have given translations of them already in the 22d number of the first volume of "The Lion."

The *Anaphora* relates the miracles of Christ as recorded in the Gospels; but supplies one or two additional, as credible as any of the rest. It does not exactly confirm the account which St. Matthew gives us, and which no Christian can doubt, that "*the graves were opened, and many dead bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*"* But it entirely corroborates the story of the miraculous darkness at the crucifixion, which Mr. Gibbon handles with such galling sarcasm, merely because none of the contemporary historians and philosophers have condescended to notice it.

"There was darkness over the whole earth, the sun in the middle of the day being darkened, and the stars appearing, among whose lights the moon appeared not, but as if turned to blood, it left its shining."† This additional circumstance of the moon being turned into

* Matthew xxvii. 52, 53.

† Τα ηλια μισον της ημερας σκοτισθεντος, και των αστρων φανεντων, εν οijs λαμπροσιν εκ Εφαινετο η σεληνη, το φεγλος ως αιματιζουσα διαλιπεν.—*In addendis ad Fabricii Codic.* Tom. 2, p. 97.

blood, is no exaggeration, but is supported by the inspired testimony of St. Peter himself, who not only assures us that *the moon was turned into blood*, but that the whole universe, “*Heaven above and earth beneath, presented one vast exhibition of blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke.*”^{*} But as there must always be as good reason to believe in miracles of light, as in miracles of darkness, and the resurrection of our Saviour was surely as worthy an occasion for a display of *fire-works* as his crucifixion, Pilate assured the Emperor Tiberius, that “early in the morning of the first of the Sabbaths,† the resurrection of Christ was announced by a display of the most astonishing and surprising feats of divine Omnipotence ever performed. At the third hour of the night, the sun broke forth into such splendor as was never before seen,‡ and the heaven became enlightened seven times more than on any other day.”§ “And the light ceased not to shine all that night.”|| But the best and sublimest part of the exhibition, as (with reverence be it spoken) exemplifying the principle of poetical justice, and making a proper *finale* to the scene was, that “an instantaneous chasm took place, and the earth opened and swallowed up all the unbelieving Jews,¶ their temple and synagogues all vanished away; and the next morning there was not so much as one of them left in all Jerusalem; ** and the Roman soldiers who had kept the sepulchre ran stark-staring mad.”†† So truly may we say, righteous art thou, O Lord, and just are thy judgments!

A coincident Passage from Arnobius.

Yet this language ascribed to Pontius Pilate, is hardly less hyperbolical than that which the gravest and most rational of the Christian Fathers is constrained to use, when referring to the same subject. It would not bear the telling in the style of historical narrative. The calm and philosophical Lardner adduces this testimony of the no less philosophical and rational Arnobius, as evidence of the “uncommon darkness and other surprising events

* Acts ii. 19.

† Οψίας γενομένης, της μιας των σαββατων.

‡ Ωφθη δε τριτης ωρας της νυκτος ηλεις, ως εδεποτε, πολλα φαιδρυνας.

§ Ωστε τον αρανον γενεσθαι φωταγωγον επταπλασιονα, υπερ πασας τας ημερας.

|| Πασαν δε νυκτα εκεινην, εκ επαυσατο το φως φαινων.—Ibid.

¶ Των δε ιουδαιων πολλοι εθανον εν τω χασματι της γης καταπιωθεντες, ως μη ευρεσθηναι ετι.

** Την αυριον το πληθος των ιουδαιων των τα κατα το ιησν λεγομενων.

Μια συναγωγη των ιουδαιων εκ υπεληφθη εν αυτη τη Ιερουσαλημ.

†† Οι δε τηροντες το μνημειον στρατιωται εν εκτασει γενομενοι.—κ. τ. λ.—Ibid.

at the time of our Lord's passion and death."* That evidence requires us to believe that, "when he had put off his body, which he carried about in a little part of himself, after he suffered himself to be seen, and that it should be known of what size he was, all the elements of the world, terrified at the strangeness of what had happened, were put out of order, the earth shook and trembled, the sea was completely poured out from its lowest bottom, the whole atmosphere was rolled up into balls of darkness, the fiery orb of the sun itself caught cold and shivered."† Our Christian Evidence writers are not able to adduce so much as a single author, friend or foe, Pagan or Christian, who has referred to these miraculous events in any way of which they themselves are not ashamed: not one who has related the story as if he believed it himself—not one, who, however in some passages he may seem to speak as an historian, has not in others abundantly indicated a *double sense*, and shown his own secret understanding, not only that no such events ever happened, but that no such person as he of whom they are related, ever existed.

JOSEPHUS, A. D. 93.

T. Flavius Josephus, a Jewish priest of the race of the Asmonean princes, was born at Jerusalem, taken prisoner by Vespasian in his wars, was present in his camp at the siege of Jerusalem, and wrote a work on the Jewish Antiquities, in twenty books, in the eighteenth of which, the third chapter, and third section, occurs the famous passage. This it is:—

“† About that time appeared Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it be right to speak of him as a man, for he was a performer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew after him many

* Lardner, vol. 2, p. 255.

† Exutus at corpore, quod in exigua sui circumferebat parte, postquam videri se passus est, cujus esset aut magnitudinis sciri, novitate rerum exterrita mundi sunt elementa turbata, tellus mota contremuit, mare funditus refluxum est: aër globis involutus est tenebrarum, igneus orbis solis tepefacto ardore dirigit.—p. 32.

‡ Τιγεται δε κατὰ τούτον τον χρονον Ιησους, σοφος ανηρ, εις ανδρα αυτον λεγειν χρη: ην γαρ παραδοξων εργων ποιητης, διδασκαλος ανθρωπων των ηδονη τ' αληθη διχομενων. Και πολλους μεν ιουδαιους, πολλους δε τοι ελληνικου επηγαγετο. Ο Χριστος ουτος ην. Και αυτον ενδειξει των πρωτων ανδρων παρ' ημιν, σταυρω επιτετιμηκotos Πιλατου, ουκ επανσαντο ουδε το πρωτον αυτον αγαπησαντες. Εφανη γαρ αυτοις, τριτην ημεραν εχων, παλιν Ζων. Των θειων προφητων ταυτα τε, και αλλα μυρια περι αυτου θαυμασια, ειρηκοτων. Εισετιτε τον, των Χριστιανων, απο τουνδε απορασμενων, ουκ επιλιπε το φυλον.

of the Jews, as well as of the Gentiles. This same was the Christ. And though Pilate, by the judgment of the chief rulers among us, delivered him to be crucified, those who from the first had loved him, fell not from him, for to them at least, he showed himself again alive on the third day : this, and ten thousand other wonderful things being what the holy prophets had foretold concerning him ; so that the Christian people, who derive their name from him, have not yet ceased to exist."

This passage was first quoted by Eusebius, who exults over it as if he had found a prodigious prize. His exultation itself only serving to awaken suspicion in every critical mind, that the passage is but another added to the long list of *his own most audacious forgeries*, as he immediately subjoins—"Wherefore, since this Hebrew historian hath of old delivered these things in his own writing, concerning our Saviour, what evasion can save those who invent arguments against these things, from standing convicted of downright impudence." *

Yet for all this terrible defiance, the most unquestionably orthodox and best learned of the whole Christian world, *have* invented arguments against the validity of this passage, and have shown to absolute demonstration the certainty that Josephus did *not* write this passage, and the probability that Eusebius himself did.

Mr. Gibbon in his style of most significant *double-throwing*, has a note, admonishing us that "the passage concerning Jesus Christ was inserted into the text of Josephus, between the time of Origen and that of Eusebius, and may furnish us with an example of no vulgar forgery." †

No vulgar forgery indeed ! the cool calculating wickedness, the reckless impiety, the matchless impudence of this detected forgery, should indeed serve us as an example, how to trust and how to respect *Christian* testimony. Appended as this note is, to Mr. Gibbon's admission of the respect due to the celebrated passage of Tacitus ; to what other sense can it be read, than as a *hint* that Mr. Gibbon had no mind to run first in the dangerous business of analysing the evidences of the Christian religion. That work must be left to Christians themselves, and

* Ταῦτα του ἐξ αὐτῶν ἑβραίων συγγραφεως ἀνεκαθεν τῇ αὐτοῦ γραφῇ, παρὶς . . . του σωτηρος ἡμῶν παραδιδωκατος, τις ἀν ἐτι λειποῖτο ἀποφυγῇ τῶν μὴ ἀναίσχυτοις, τοῖς κατὰ πλάσμενοις ὑπομνήματα.—*Sequenti commate.*

† Decline and Fall, chap. 16.

as no Lardner has yet given us leave to take the same liberty with the passage of Tacitus, "the most sceptical criticism" is obliged to respect its integrity. But it will fall in its turn. The fate of the Sibylline oracles: of the forged admissions of Porphyry: of the correspondence of Christ and Abgarus: of the testimony of Phlegon: of the letter to Tiberius: of the monument to Nero: and of all other wicked devices that served the turn of imposing on the weakness of our forefathers, but will serve no longer; awaits it. But a few years ago, and the author who had suggested a suspicion against the genuineness of the passage in Josephus, if he had happily escaped the horrors of a twelvemonths' imprisonment, must at least have reckoned on having to sustain his full share of that abuse and hatred, with which the ignorant part of the world, which is unfortunately the greatest part, has generally rewarded the wisest and best men that ever lived in it.—But conviction has thus far forced itself upon the mind of the highest authority which Christians themselves can appeal to. Their own all-deciding Dr. Lardner has pronounced this passage to be an interpolation.*

It is rejected also by Ittigius, Blondell, Le Clerc, Vandalé, Bishop Warburton, and Tanaquil Faber.

This latter author suspects that Eusebius himself was the author of the interpolation. What then must we think of Eusebius?

We have already seen that Eusebius is the sheet-anchor of reliance for all we know of the three first centuries of the Christian history. What then must we think of the three first centuries of the Christian history?

An author who would deliberately, and with his own hand, forge a testimony, and foist it into the writings of another who never did, and probably never would, have borne any such testimony; and then quote his own known lie, as a proof of the truth of the Christian religion, and deal out his anathemas against all who should presume to question it—What would he not have forged? What must not he himself have thought of the real nature and merits of a cause that needed to be supported by such means? It is curious to see, how even after the definitive judgment of such high and confessedly orthodox au-

* I have published these arguments in my Forty-fourth, and also in my Ninetieth Oration, delivered before the Areopagus of the Christian Evidence Society, a few weeks before the commencement of the persecution which has afforded me leisure for these researches.

thorities, we are still occasionally pestered with puerile or petulant last dying struggles, to rescue this holy cheat from the sentence passed upon it—

For faith, fanatic faith, once wedded fast
To some dear falsehood, hugs it to the last.

We are required to give a wholly different reading to the passage; to introduce imaginary parentheses, to make arbitrary omissions; or egregiously to mistranslate it: and *thus* forsooth to chisel it into a supposable possibility that Josephus *might* have written it.

Among the illustrious who have argued in this way, are Dr. Samuel Chandler, Dr. Nathaniel Foster, Mr. Henley, Mr. Bryant,* the Abbe de Voisin, and the Abbe Bullet. But the learned biographer of Lardner, in his life affixed to the quarto edition of his works, justly concludes, “Of what avail can it be to produce a testimony so doubtful in itself, and which some of the ablest advocates for the truth of the Gospel, reject as an interpolation.”†

Dr. Lardner, after having thoroughly weighed all the arguments that could be adduced in its favour, strenuously defends his former opinion, that the passage is an interpolation. “It ought therefore to be forever discarded from any place among the evidences of Christianity.”‡

Dr. Lardner’s arguments against the passage, in his own words, are these:

1. “I do not perceive that we at all want the suspected testimony to Jesus, which was never quoted by any of our Christian ancestors before Eusebius. §

2. “Nor do I recollect that Josephus has any where mentioned the name or word *Christ*, in any of his works; except the testimony above mentioned, and the passage concerning James the Lord’s brother.||

3. “It interrupts the narrative.

4. “The language is quite Christian.

5. “It is not quoted by Chrysostom,¶ though he often refers to Josephus, and could not have omitted quoting it, had it been then, in the text.

6. “It is not quoted by Photius, though he has three articles concerning Josephus.

* In his *Vindiciæ Flavianæ*, or a Vindication of the Testimony given by Josephus concerning our Saviour Jesus Christ, 1777.

† Life of Dr. Lardner, by Dr. Kippis, p. 28.

‡ Ibid. 23.

§ His Answer to Dr. Chandler.

|| Ibid.

¶ John, Bishop of Constantinople, who died A. D. 407, was called St. Chrysostom, or Golden-mouthed, from the charms of his eloquence—the author of the last prayer in our Liturgy.

7. "Under the article Justus of Tiberias, this author (Photius) expressly states that this historian (Josephus) being a Jew, has not taken the least notice of Christ.

8. "Neither Justin in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, nor Clemens Alexandrinus, who made so many extracts from ancient authors, nor Origen against Celsus, have ever mentioned this testimony.

9. "But on the contrary, in Chapter xxxv. of the first book of that work, Origen openly affirms, that Josephus who had mentioned John the Baptist, did *not acknowledge Christ*.

Dr. Lardner was anxious to have studied the defence set up for this passage by the Abbé Bullet, which it seems never came to his hands. Of this defence, the chief arguments, in its own words, are—

1. "That Josephus could not be ignorant that there had appeared in Judea, a charlatan, impostor, magician, or prophet, called Jesus, who had either performed wonders, or found the secret of persuading numbers to think so.

2. "That he *ought* to have taken some notice of Jesus and his disciples; and that

3. "Because Suetonius and Tacitus have done so.

4. "Because, he has given an accurate account of *all* the impostors, or heads of parties which arose amongst the Jews, from the empire of Augustus, to the ruin of Jerusalem.

5. "Because, the faith of history required that the existence of Jesus and his disciples should not be passed over in silence;" and

Hence it is inferred that Josephus *must* have written this passage: and its not being found by any of the fathers before Eusebius, is to be accounted for, by the supposition (a pretty fair one) that Josephus himself might have published two distinct editions of his works, inserting the passage in that edition, which came to the hand of Eusebius, but omitting it in all others.

So struggles conquered sophistry against victorious truth.

THE CELEBRATED INSCRIPTION TO NERO.

As long as it would do—and criticism, afraid of losing its ears in the pillory, was constrained to whisper its discoveries in a corner, and vent its secret sentiment, in "curses not loud but deep," the evidences of the Christian

religion, boasted of the celebrated inscription on a public monument, erected at the time of the events it recorded, and still preserved; ascribing to the emperor Nero, the praise of having purged the province of Spain, in which it was situated, from those who in his times, were labouring to inculcate a new superstition.

So that here were all the marks of genuineness which Mr. Leslie in his *Short and Easy Method* with Deists, maintains to be sufficient to demonstrate an utter impossibility of imposture, in any document in which they are found concurring. This celebrated inscription is published by the learned Gruterus in the first volume of his *Inscriptions*, p. 238, is copied by Dr. Lardner from Gruter,* and is by the learned Pagi, and other no less learned advocates of the evidences of the Christian religion, vindicated by arguments quite as learned, as ingenious and as convincing, as any that have hitherto been adduced for the equally veracious testimonies of Josephus and Tacitus. The inscription is,

NERONI CLAVDIO CAESARI AVG PONT MAX
OB PROVINC. LATRONIB.
ET HIS QVI NOVAM
GENERI HVM. SVPER
STITIONEM INCVLCAV.
PVRGATAM.

i. e. "To Claudius Cæsar Nero Augustus Supreme Pontiff. In honour of the province having been purged from thieves, and from those who were endeavouring to teach the human race a new superstition." *Subaudi*—no better than thieves. I particularly wish to engage the reader's consideration to the homogeneity of character which this celebrated inscription presents, to the still more celebrated passage of Tacitus. Apply the one, an undoubted and unquestionable imposture, as a test of comparison to the other.

The example of this passage demonstrates these corollaries:—

1. That Christian forgers were very heedful to forge in *keeping* and character; and

2. That in falsely representing what their enemies might have been supposed to have said of them, they suited the supposition to the person; and

* Lardner. vol. iii. n. 409.

3. Rather *overdid* the representation for the better making sure against being suspected of being the authors of it themselves.

4. Reviling and decrying themselves, in rather stronger terms than their enemies would have been likely to use against them.

5. Thus they would contentedly be put on a level with thieves, and have their divine religion spoken of as something that ought to be purged out of society; for the sake of making the testimony, which they had forged themselves, the more plausibly seem to be, the testimony of their enemies.

6. They, holding it better to be spoken of in any way, than not to be spoken of at all; and

7. The specific object and aim of the forgery, not being to represent what the character of Christianity was; (which they could easily and at any time vindicate,) but

8. To represent Christians and Christianity to have existed, *when* and *where* they did *not* exist, to have had an extent of prevalence which it had *not*, and to have been of a degree of consequence and notoriety, as distinct from any of the multifarious modifications of the ancient Paganism, from which in fact and truth it was neither distinct, nor distinguishable.

But this celebrated inscription has at length served its generation; and it is now no longer indictable at common law, to own the truth with respect to it, and pack it off with Josephus, Lentulus, Pilate, Phlegon, and all the whole *noble army of martyrs*. The distinguished Spanish historian, John de Ferreras, has escaped the inquisition, though he has ventured to own that he could not restrain himself from confessing,* “that it was even Cyriac of Ancona, who first foisted this bit of Christian evidence upon human credulity; and that it was from his brewing, that all the rest of ’em filled their vessels, but now happily any one may judge of it as he pleases.”

This allowance has emboldened Mr. Gibbon, who shows in a note that he has read the passage of Ferreras, to fling stones at this inscription, and to say “it is a

* Je ne puis m’empêcher d’observer que Cyriac d’Ancone fut le premier qui publia cette inscription, et que c’est de lui que les autres l’ont tirée; mais comme la foi de cet Ecrivain est suspecte au jugement de tous les sçavans, que d’ailleurs il n’y a ni vestige ni souvenir de cette inscription dans les places on l’ont dit qu’elle s’est trouvée, et qu’on ne sait ou la prendre a present, chacun peut en porter le jugement qu’il voudra.—*Histoire generale d’Espagne*, tom. 1, p. 192.

manifest and acknowledged forgery, contrived by that noted impostor, Cyriacus of Ancona, to flatter the pride and prejudices of the Spaniards."* He would have said as much of the passage of Tacitus, had he but found another John de Ferreras, to pioneer his way through the brake.

SIMILAR INSCRIPTIONS.

While the lie would do, nothing was so common or so natural as that it should be often overdone. The advocates for Christianity once meeting a little success in this way, would turn every mile-stone on the roads into a monument of Christianity. More than a copy would be more than the worth of these to the emperors Diocletian and Maximinian. They rest like that to Nero, on the faith of Baronius.

1. DIOCLET. JOVIUS. MAXIMI. HERCULEI. CAESS. AUGG. AMPLIFICATO PER. ORIENTEM. ET. OCCID. IMPER. ROM. ET. NOMINE CHRISTIANORUM. DELETO. QUI. REMP. EVERTEBANT; and

2. DIOCLETIAN CAES. AUG. GALLERIO. IN ORIENTE ADOPT SUPERSTITIONE CHRISTI. UBIQV. DELETA CULTU DEORUM PROPAGATO.

Procopius mentions a Phœnician inscription upon two famous pillars near Tangiers, which was,

Ἡμεῖς οὐμὲν οἱ φυλοντες ἀπο προσώπου Ἰησοῦ τοῦ ληστοῦ υἱοῦ Νανη.—i. e.

"We are they who fled from the face of Joshua the robber, the son of Nun."

Thus have we not only forged writings, but pretended monuments that never existed, to record events that never happened. So reckless, so desperate, so audacious are the tricks that have been resorted to, to give to Bible *Skiology*, an appearance of historical fact; that is, to bring heaven and earth together.

TACITUS, A. D. 107.

We have investigated the claims of every document possessing a plausible claim to be investigated, which history has preserved of the transactions of the first century; and not so much as one single passage, purport-

* Gibbon, chap. 16.

ing to have been written at any time within the first hundred years, can be produced from any independent authority whatever, to show the existence *at or before* that time of such a person as Jesus Christ, or of such a set of men as could be accounted to be his disciples.

After the many forgeries and interpolations that have been detected in the texts of authors of high repute, nay the forging of whole books and palming them upon authors of established reputation, for the purpose of kidnapping their respectability into the service of Christianity, and fathering them with admissions, which they never made nor intended ; it would have been next to a miracle, if the text of the great prince of historians, had been suffered to come down to us unengrafted with a suitable recognition of the existence of Christ, and of Christians : or if, after, the shrewdest talent and profoundest learning were engaged in the service, the important business of managing such an interpolation had been left to hands that could not have done it better than to fear detection from any ordinary powers of criticism.

Eusebius had christianized Josephus ; it remained for shrewder masters of criticism, and the more accomplished scholars and infidels of a later age to perform a similar regeneration upon the text of Tacitus.

This illustrious Roman inherits immortal renown as an historian, for his beautiful description of the manners of the ancient Germans, his *Life of Agricola*, his *History of Rome*, from the time of the emperor Galba to the death of Domitian ; and lastly for his *Annals*, beginning at Tiberius, and terminating with the death of Nero. He was born about A. D. 62, and wrote his *Annals* very late in life, as nearly as probable conjecture can bring us, about A. D. 107.

The first publication of any part of the *Annals* of Tacitus, was by Johannes de Spire, at Venice, in the year 1468. His imprint being made from a single manuscript, in his own power and possession only, and purporting to have been written in the eighth century. From this manuscript, which none but the most learned would know of, none but the most curious would investigate, and none but the most interested would transcribe, or be allowed to transcribe ; and that too, in an age and country, when and where, to have suggested but a *doubt* against the authenticity of any document which the authorities had once chosen to adopt as evidence of

Christianity, would have subjected the conscientious sceptic to the faggot; from *this*, all other manuscripts and printed copies of the works of Tacitus are derived: and consequently in the forty-fourth section of the fifteenth book of these Annals, we have

THE CELEBRATED PASSAGE.

After a description of the terrible fire at Rome in the tenth of Nero, and the sixty-fourth of our Lord, in which a large part of the city was consumed; and an account of the order given for rebuilding and beautifying it, and the methods used to appease the anger of the Gods: Tacitus adds,* “But neither all the human help, nor the liberality of the Emperor, nor all the atonements presented to the Gods, availed to abate the infamy he lay under of having ordered the city to be set on fire. To suppress, therefore, this common rumour, Nero procured others to be accused, and inflicted exquisite punishments upon those people who were held in abhorrence for their crimes, and were **COMMONLY known by the name of CHRISTIANS.** *They had their denomination from Christus, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate.* This pernicious superstition, though checked for awhile, broke out again, and spread, not over JUDEA, THE SOURCE of this evil, but reached the city also: whither flow from all quarters all things vile and shameful, and where they find shelter and encouragement. At first, *they* only were apprehended who confessed themselves of that sect; afterwards, *a vast multitude* discovered by them; all which were condemned, not so much for the crime of burning the city, as for their enmity to mankind. Their executions were so contrived as to expose

* “Sed non ope humanâ, non largitionibus Principis, aut Deûm placamentis, decedebat infamia, quin jussu incendium crederetur. Ergò abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos, et quæsitissimis pœnis adfecit, quos per flagitia invisos, vulgus *Christianos* appellabat. Auctor nominis ejus **CHRISTUS**, Tiberio imperitante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat. Repressaque in præsens exitiabilis superstitione rursus erumpebat non modò per Judæam, originem ejus mali, sed per Urbem etiam, quò cuncta undique atrocis, aut pudenda, confluent, celebranturque. Igitur primò correpti qui fatebantur, deinde indicio eorum, multitudo ingens, haud perinde in crimine incendii, quàm odio humani generis, convicti sunt. Et pereuntibus addita ludibria, ut ferarum tergis coniecti, laniatu canum interirent, aut crucibus affixi, aut flammandi, atque ubi defecisset dies, in usum nocturni luminis urerentur. Hortos suos ei spectaculo Nero obtulerat, et Circense ludicrum edebat, habitu aurigæ permixtus plebi, vel curriculo insistens. Unde quamquam adversus fontes et novissima exempla meritos, miseratio oriebatur, tamquam non utilitate publicâ, sed in sævitiam unius absumerentur.”

them to derision and contempt. Some were covered over with the skins of wild beasts, and torn to pieces by dogs ; some were crucified : others, having been daubed over with combustible materials, were set up as lights in the night-time, and thus burned to death. Nero made use of his own gardens as a theatre on this occasion, and also exhibited the diversions of the Circus, sometimes standing in the crowd as a spectator, in the habit of a chariot-*eer* ; at other times driving a chariot himself ; till at length these men, though really criminal and deserving exemplary punishment, began to be commiserated as people who were destroyed, not out of regard to the public welfare, but only to gratify the cruelty of one man."

I consider this celebrated passage to be a forgery or interpolation upon the text of Tacitus, from no disposition, I am sure, to give offence to those who may have as good reasons, and probably better, for esteeming it to be unquestionably genuine, from no wish to deduct from Christianity one tittle or iota of its fair or probable evidence, but from a consideration solely of *the facts of the case*, which I here subjoin ; and which, if they shall have less weight in the judgment of the reader than of the author : the reader will reap the advantage of holding the opposite conclusion, not only in concurrence with the decision of the wisest and best men in the world, but on that surer ground of satisfaction with which every conviction is held, after men have been so faithful to themselves as to weigh the objections that can be alleged against it.

The facts of the case are these—

1. This passage, which would have served the purpose of Christian quotation better than any other in all the writings of Tacitus, or of any Pagan writer whatever, is not quoted by any of the Christian Fathers.

2. It is not quoted by Tertullian, though he had read and largely quotes the works of Tacitus ;

3. And though his argument immediately called for the use of this quotation with so loud a voice,* that his omis-

* In his celebrated Apology, Tertullian is so hot upon the scent of this passage, that his missing it had it been in existence, is almost miraculous. In Chapter 5 of this Apology, he says, "Consult your histories, there you will find that Nero was the first to draw the bloody and imperial sword against this sect then rising at Rome." Yet even here, he stumbles not on this famous passage.

sion of it, if it had really existed, amounts to a *violent improbability*.

4. This Father has spoken of Tacitus in a way that it is absolutely impossible that he should have spoken of him, had his writings contained such a passage.*

5. It is not quoted by Clemens Alexandrinus, who set himself entirely to the work of adducing and bringing together all the admissions and recognitions which Pagan authors had made of the existence of Christ or Christians before his time.

6. It has been no where stumbled on by the laborious and all-seeking Eusebius, who could by no possibility have missed of it, and whom it would have saved from the labour and infamy of forging the passage of Josephus; of adducing the 'correspondence of Christ and Abgarus, and the Sibylline verses; of forging a divine revelation from the God Apollo, in attestation of Christ's ascension into heaven; and innumerable other of his pious and holy cheats.

7. There is no vestige nor trace of its existence anywhere in the world before the 15th century.

8. It rests then entirely upon the fidelity of a single individual;

9. And he, having the ability, the opportunity, and the strongest possible incitement of interest to induce him to introduce the interpolation.

10. The passage itself, though unquestionably the work of a master, and entitled to be pronounced the *chef d'œuvre* of the art: betrays the *penchant* of that delight in blood and in descriptions of bloody horrors, as peculiarly characteristic of the Christian disposition, as it was abhorrent to the mild and gentle mind and highly cultivated taste of Tacitus.

11. It bears a character of exaggeration, and trenches on the laws of rational probability, which the writings of Tacitus are rarely found to do.

12. It may be met and overthrown by the concussion of directly conflicting evidence of equal weight of challenge; a shock to which no statements of Tacitus besides are liable.

13. It is not conceivable that Nero, who, with all his

* After other quotations from the writings of Tacitus, Tertullian continues his argument: "And indeed that same Cornelius Tacitus, *that most prating of all liars*, in the same history relates, 'At enim Cornelius Tacitus sane ille mendaciorum loquacissimus in ead. hist. ref. &c.'"—*Citat. Kortholt*, p. 272.

crimes, was at least not *safe* in the commission of crime ; and paid at last the forfeit of his life, not to private revenge, but to public justice, for less heinous enormities ; should have been so ludibund in cruelty, and wanton in wickedness, as this passage would represent him.

14. It is not conceivable, that such good and innocent people as the primitive Christians must be supposed to be, should have provoked so great a degree of hostility, or that they should not sufficiently have *endeared* themselves to their fellow-citizens, to prevent the possibility of their being so treated.

15. It is not conceivable, that so just a man as Tacitus unquestionably was, could have spoken of the professors of a purer religion than the world before had seen, as really criminal, and deserving exemplary punishment.

16. The whole account is falsified by the text of the New Testament, in which Nero is spoken of as *the Minister of God for good* ; and the Christians have the assurance of God himself, that so long as they were followers of that which was good, there was none that would harm them.—See 1 Peter iii. 13.

17. It is falsified by the apology of Tertullian, and the far more respectable testimony of Melito, Bishop of Sardis, who explicitly states that the Christians, up to his time, the third century, had never been victims of persecution : and that it was in provinces lying beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire, and not in Judea, that Christianity originated.—See their testimonies in this **DIEGESIS**.

18. Not a disposition to reject Christianity, but an eagerness and promptness to run after and embrace it, has in all ages been the constitutional cacoethes of the human mind.

19. Tacitus has in no other part of his writings made the least allusion to Christ or Christians.

20. The use of this passage as a part of the Evidences of the Christian Religion, is absolutely modern.

SUETONIUS, A. D. 110.

C. Suetonius Tranquillus, A. D. 110, a Roman historian, in his life of Claudius, who reigned from A. D. 41 to 54 ; says, that “ he drove the Jews, who, at the suggestion of *Krestus*, were constantly rioting, out of Rome.*

* *Judeos impulsore Chresto, assidue tumultuantes Româ expulit.*

Orosius, a Christian writer of the fifth century, who quotes the passage, does not pretend to know whether it was the Christians or Jews who were thus expelled. Notwithstanding the absurdity of the supposition of this Chrestus being Christ, and of Christ heading riots in Rome; this passage has served its generation as Christian Evidence. Dr. Lardner, however, admits that "learned men are not satisfied that this relates to the Christians."

2. In his life of Nero, Suetonius says, that "The Christians,* a race of men of a new and villainous, wicked or magical superstition, were visited with punishment." I hope it may not offend them, to hope that neither does this relate to Christians.

3. In his life of Vespasian, he says, "There had been for a long time all over the East, a notion firmly believed, that it was in the fates (in the decrees or books of the fates) that at that time, some which came out of Judea should obtain the Empire of the world."

This is as far as Paley, Doddridge, and other sophistical Christian Evidence manufacturers, find it convenient to quote the passage. The finishing would spoil their use of it—this it is,

"By the event it appeared that that prediction related to the Roman Emperor. The Jews, applying it to themselves, went into a rebellion."†

Josephus himself calls this an ambiguous oracle, and admits its application to Vespasian only, though found in their sacred Scriptures.‡ So little will the passage serve the cause in which it has been enlisted.

There is no reasonable ground for thinking that by *Chrestus*, Suetonius meant *Christus*. *Chrestus* itself is a proper name for any good man. And by a most curious coincidence with the orthography of Suetonius, we find the earliest Fathers actually punning on the word; holding it as entirely indifferent whether they were called Christians, or Chrestians; giving equally absurd and riddle *me ree* reasons for either the one name or the other, but never

* *Afflicti supplicii Christiani, genus hominum superstitionis novæ et male-*
licæ.

† *Percrebuerat Oriente toto, vetus et constans opinio, esse in fatiis, ut eo tempore Judeâ profecti rerum potirentur. Id de Imperatore Romano, quantum eventu postea patuit, predictam Judææ ad se trahentes rebellârunt. Cap. 4.*

‡ *Χρησμος ἀμφιβολος ὁμοίως ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς συγγραμμοῖς γραμματα, ὅθεν διακρίνεται τὴν θυσίαν τὸ λογικὸν ἡγεμονίαν, ἀποδεικνύοντος ἐπὶ ἰσραὴλ αὐτοκρατορίας.—*
Jos. de Bell. l. 6, c. 5, sect. 4.

distinctly pretending to derive that name from any particular Christus, or Chrestus, who had had a real existence, and been the founder of their sect. The mere Iotacism or change of the long *e* into *i*, or *i* into *e*, often occasioned the substitution of the one word for the other.

1. *The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch* ; Acts xi. 26, that is, unquestionably, they assumed not the name themselves, but it was given them by the Gentiles, in whose sense of it, consequently, the real meaning of it is to be found.

2. Justin Martyr, in his account of the name, which he gives in his apology to Antoninus Pius, thus puns away all possible reference to the name of Christ as the founder of a sect. "We are called Christians. So then we are the best of men (Chrestians), and it can never be just to hate what is (chrest) good and kind.*

3. Theophilus of Antioch, after a long string of puns upon Christus, and Chrestus; thinks that Christus, and not Chrestus should be the word, because of the sublime significancy of Christus, which signifies "the sweet, and agreeable; and most useful, and never to be laughed at article of pomatum.†

"What use of a ship (he argues) unless it be besmeared? What tower or palace would be elegant or useful unless it were greased?" "What man comes into life or enters into a conflict, without being anointed? What piece of work could be considered finished, if it were not oiled? The air itself and every creature under heaven, is as it were anointed with light and spirit. Undoubtedly we are called *Christians* for this reason, and none other, than because we are anointed with the oil of God."‡

Tertullian,§ Clemens Alexandrinus,|| and St. Jerom,¶ abound in the same strain.—Every where we meet with puns and conundrums on the name; no where with a ves-

* Χριστιανοί είναι κατηγορούμεθα, το δε χρηστον μισεσθαι ου δίκαιον—Χρηστοτατοι υπάρχομεν.—*Justini Apol.*

† Οτι το χριστον ηδυν και ευχρηστον και ακαταγέλαστον εστι.—κ. τ. λ. lib. 1, Ab Antolycum.

‡ Τοιγαρουν ημεις τουτου εινεκεν καλουμεθα χριστιανοι, οτι χραιομεθα ελαιαι θειου.—*Ibidem.*

§ Cum perperam Christianus pronunciatur, (puta Chrestianus) de suavitate vel benignitate compositum nomen est.—*Terbul.*

|| Quia apud Græcos, χρηστοτης utrumque sonat. Virtus est lenis blanda tranquilla et omnium bonorum consortio.—*Hieronym.* in Gal. v. 22.

¶ Αυτικα οι εις χριστον πεπιστευοτες χρηστοι τε εσι και λεγονται.—*Clementis Strommat.*

tige of the real existence of a person to whom the name was *distinctively* appropriate.

PLINY, A. D. 110.

Pliny the younger, was born A. D. 61. He held important civil and religious offices under the Roman Government, was the personal friend of Tacitus, and was in the year 106 sent by the emperor Trajan as proconsul into the province of Bithynia, from whence he wrote the annexed letter :

“ *Pliny to the emperor Trajan wisheth health and happiness.—It is my constant custom, sir, to refer myself to you in all matters concerning which I have any doubt: for who can better direct me when I hesitate, or instruct me when I am ignorant. I have never been present at any trials of *Christians*; so that I knew not well what is the subject matter of punishment, or of enquiry, or what strictness ought to be used in either. Nor have I been a little perplexed to determine whether any difference ought to be made on account of age, or whether the young and tender, and the full grown and robust, ought to be treated all alike; whether repentance should entitle to pardon, or whether all who have once been Christians ought to be punished, though they are now no longer so; whether the name itself, although no crimes be detected, or crimes only belonging to the name, ought to be punished. Concerning all these things I am in doubt.

“ In the mean time, I have taken this course with all who have been brought before me, and have been accused as Christians. I have put the question to them, whether they were Christians? Upon their confessing to me that they were, I repeated the question a second and a third time, threatening also to punish them with death. Such as still persisted, I ordered away to be punished; for it

* *Soleanne est mihi, Domine, omnia de quibus dubito, ad te referre: quis enim potest melius vel cunctationem meam regere, vel ignorantiam meam instruere. Cognitionibus de Christianis interful nunquam: ideo vel quid vel quatenus aut puniri soleat aut quæri, nescio. Nec etiam hæsitavi mediocriter, sitne aliquod discrimen ætatum, an quamlibet teneri nihil a robustioribus differant: deturne penitentiae venia, an ei qui prorsus Christianus fuit, desisse non prosit: nomen ipsum, etiam si flagitiis careat, an flagitia cohærentia nomini puniantur. Interim in is qui ad me tanquam Christiani deferebantur, hunc sum sequutus modum. Interrogavi ipsos, an essent Christiani: confitentes iterum ac tertio interrogavi, supplicio minatus; perseverantes duci jussi. Neque enim dubitabam, qualecunque esset quod faterentur, pervicaciam certè, et inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri. Fuerunt alii similis amentiae: quos, quia cives Romani erant, annotavi in urbem remittendos.*

was no doubt with me, whatever might be the nature of their opinions, that contumacy and inflexible obstinacy ought to be punished. There were others, of the same infatuation, whom, because they are Roman citizens, I have noted down to be sent to the city. In a short time, the crime spreading itself, even whilst under persecution, as is usual in such cases, divers sorts of people came in my way. An information was presented to me, without mentioning the author, containing the names of many persons, who, upon examination, denied that they were Christians, or had ever been so; who repeated after me an invocation of the gods, and, with wine and frankincense, made supplication to your image, which for that purpose I had caused to be brought and set before them, together with the statues of the deities. Moreover, they reviled the name of Christ. None of which things, as is said, they who are really Christians can by any means be compelled to do. These, therefore, I thought proper to discharge.

“ Others were named by an informer, who at first confessed that they were Christians, but afterwards denied it: and some, acknowledging that they had been, declared that they had relinquished the profession, some above three years ago, some a longer time, and several more than twenty years. All these paid the accustomed divine honours both to your statue and to the images of the gods; and they also reviled Christ. They moreover declared that the whole of what was laid to their charge, whether it were a crime or a mere error, consisted in this: that they made it a practice, on a stated day, to meet together before day-light,* to sing hymns with responses to Christ as a god, and to bind themselves by a solemn institution, not to any wrong act, but that they would not

Mox ipso tractu, ut fieri solet, diffundente se crimine, plures species inciderunt. Propositus est libellus, sine auctore, multorum nomina continens, qui negarent se esse Christianos, aut fuisse; quum, præeunte me, deos appellarent, et imagini tuæ, quam propter hoc jusseram cum simulacris numinum afferri, thure ac vino supplicarent; præterea maledicerent Christo: quorum nihil cogi posse dicuntur, qui sunt reverâ Christiani. Ergo dimittendos putavi. Alii ab indice nominati, esse se Christianos dixerunt, et mox negaverunt: fuisse quidem, sed desisse, quidam antè triennium, quidam antè plures annos, non nemo etiam antè viginti quoque. Omnes et imaginem tuam, deorumque simulacra venerati sunt; ii et Christo maledixerunt. Affirma-

* If this letter be genuine, these nocturnal meetings were what no prudent government *could* allow; they fully justify the charges of Cæcilius in Minutius Felix, of Celsus in Origen, and of Lucian, that the primitive Christians were a skulking, light-shunning, secret, mystical, *freemasonry* sort of confederation, against the general welfare and peace of society.

commit any thefts or robberies or acts of unchastity, that they would never break their word, that they would never violate a trust; that, when these observances were finished, they separated, and afterwards came together again to a common and innocent repast; but that they had given over this last practice after my edict, in which, according to your orders, I forbade social meetings. Upon these declarations, I thought it requisite to get at the entire truth by putting to the torture two women who were called deaconesses: but I discovered nothing beyond an austere, an excessive superstition. Upon the whole, therefore, I determined to adjourn the trials, in order to consult you: for the case appears to me to demand my so doing, particularly on account of the great number of the persons who are in danger of suffering. For many of all ages and every rank, of both sexes likewise, are accused, and will be accused. Nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but the villages and the country. It however, still seems to me, that this evil may easily be restrained. For it is assuredly, sufficiently obvious, that it is upon the decline. The temples which were a little while ago almost deserted, begin to be resorted to, as usual: and victims, which hitherto hardly found a purchaser, are now in full request: whence you may naturally suppose, that a multitude of men might be reclaimed, if allowance were granted to their repentance."—*Pliny's Epistle, book 10, letter 97.*

However little room for doubt of the genuineness and authenticity of this letter there may seem to be, we ought not to have known that the name of *Christians* was common to

bant autem, hanc fuisse summam vel culpe sue, vel erroris, quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire; carmenque Christo, quasi Deo, dicere secum invicem; seque sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent: quibus peractis morem sibi discedendi fuisse, rursusque coeundi ad capiendum cibum, promiscuum tamen, et innoxium: quod ipsum facere desisse post edictum meum, quo secundum mandata tua heterias esse veteram. Quo magis necessarium credidi, ex duabus ancillis quæ ministræ, dicebantur, quid esset verum et per tormenta querere. Sed nihil aliud inveni, quam superstitionem pravam et immodicam. Ideoque, dilatâ cognitione, ad consulendum te decurri. Visa est enim mihi res digna consultatione, maximè propter periclitantium numerum. Multi enim omnis ætatis, omnis ordinis, utriusque sexus etiam, vocantur in periculum, et vocabuntur. Neque enim civitates tantum, sed vicos etiam atque agros superstitionis istius contagio pervagata est: quæ videtur sisti et corrigi posse. Certè satis constat, prope jam desolata templa cœpisse celebrari, et sacra solennia diu intermissa repeti: passimque venire victimas, quarum adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur. Ex quo facile est opinari, quæ turba hominum emendari possit, si sit pœnitentie locus.—*Plini Epistolar. lib. 70, Epist. 97.*

the worshippers of the god Serapis: and the name of Christ common to the whole rabblement of gods, kings, and priests; that the practices described in this letter, are none other than were common to innumerable sects of cracked-brained *pagan* visionaries; and that the observers of these practices were generally found to be such desperately wicked characters as are ever prompt to turn faith into faction, and religion into rebellion; so that no vigilant and prudent magistrate could be indifferent to their machinations, or not feel himself bound to use all the powers with which the laws invested him, to sift the principles and grounds of their combination, and to make himself thoroughly acquainted not only with all that they professed, but with their *arcana interiora*, the more interior secrets, policy, and purpose of their institution. We cannot imagine, that so wise and good a man, so just and candid a magistrate, who evidently wished to make the best of the case for the accused party, would conceal from his friend and master, Trajan, any thing in their favour that had come to his knowledge.

Did they tell him, then, that they were the followers of a religion which had "God for its author, happiness for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter?"

Did they tell him that they were the disciples of one, who then, and as yet within the memory of man, had a real existence, had taught a purer morality, had wrought miracles, had died, and risen again to life?

Did they lay down the important distinction between the "teacher sent from God;" and the innumerable Christs, Messiahs, Emmanuels, Logoses, Words, and Messengers of the heathen mythology, in that HE was the object of history; *they* the figments of romance, that "HE was real, *they* an empty name."

Did they so much as mention the name of Jesus of Nazareth? Did they refer to one single circumstance of his life as a man, or drop an enigma that could set the mind to guess at the Galilean rather than the Stagyrte? or make it more probable, that they meant the man of Nazareth rather than the Cacodemon of the Forest? No! No! nothing of the sort! not a text, not an iota, not a vestige of Christianity in her. We have the name of Christ, and nothing else but the name, where the name of Apollo or Bacchus would have filled up the sense quite as well.

It is not to be concealed, however, that the literati of Germany have maintained that this celebrated letter is another instance to be added to the long list of Christian forgeries; and that the more learned German divines and critics have pretty generally given it up. The learned Dr. Semler, of Leipsic, adduces nine arguments against its authenticity,* is supported by Corrode,† and was replied to by Haversaast‡ and Gierig.§

My room will not admit my entering on the merits of this controversy; and as, after all I have heard of it, I am not disposed to admit the passage to be fairly conquered, there is the less occasion for my doing so. -I still think it *may be* genuine, and *that* mainly upon the strength of its amounting to so very little or nothing in weight of evidence, even if its genuineness were unquestionable.

I leave the reader to give what consideration he may to the objections to the claims of this Epistle, which I subjoin without the advantage of the lights Dr. Semler may have cast on the subject.

1. The undeniable fact that the first Christians were the greatest liars and forgers that had ever been in the whole world, and that they actually stopt at nothing.

2. The undeniable fact that it was not the ignorant and vulgar among them, but their best scholars, the shrewdest, cleverest, and highest in rank and talent, who were the practitioners of these forgeries.||

3. The flagrant atopism of Christians, being found in the remote province of Bythinia, before they had acquired any notoriety in Rome.¶

4. The inconsistency of religious persecution, with the just and philosophic character of the Roman government.

5. The inconsistency of the supposition that so just and moral a people as the primitive Christians are assumed to

* Neue Versuche die Kirchen historie der ersten Jahrhunderte inehr aufzuklaren: by Jo. Salom. Semler, Leipsic, 1788, Fesc. 1, pp. 119—246.

† Beytragi zur Beforderung des versmuftigew Denkens in der Religion.

‡ Vertheidigung der Plinischen Brise uber die Arristen gegen die Einwendungen der H. D. Semler, Gottingen, 1788.

§ Gierig, in his edition of the Letters of C. Plinius Secund. Leipsic, 1802.—Gierig acknowledges the meritorious diligence and fidelity of Semler, in examining the credibility of the monuments of Antiquity. The German divines have almost the exclusive merit of the faculty, of being just and civil to their theological opponents; but their orthodoxy is proportionably suspicious.

|| "Origen actually embodied fraud into a system, practised it with the approbation of his fellows, and gave it the technical name of *ECONOMIA*, by which it has gone ever since."—*Higgins's Celtic Druids*.

¶ "Quo cuncta undique atrocita aut pudenda confluent celebranturque!"

have been, should have been the first to provoke the Roman government to depart from its universal maxims of toleration, liberality, and indifference.

6. The inconsistency of such conduct with the humane and dignified character of Pliny.

7. The use of the torture to extort confession—torturing and tormenting being peculiarly and characteristically Christian.

8. The choice of women to be the subjects of this torture; when the ill-usage of women was, in like manner, abhorrent to the Roman character, and peculiarly and characteristically Christian.

9. The repetition of this letter in the one ascribed to Tiberianus, being precisely such a repetition as we find of the famous forgery of Josephus, in the Persic History of Christ, by Jeremy Xavier.* A forgery having once been successful, it should seem the Christians must needs ply it again. So here is a second throw at the same game.

“Tiberianus, Governor of Syria, to the Emperor Trajan.

“I am quite tired with punishing and destroying the Galilæans, or those of the sect called Christians, according to your orders; yet they never cease to profess voluntarily what they are, and to offer themselves to death. Wherefore, I have laboured, by exhortations and threats, to discourage them from daring to confess to me that they are of that sect. Yet in spite of all persecution, they continue still to do it. Be pleased therefore, to let me know what your highness thinks proper to be done with them.”

Cotelr. Patr. Apostol. vol. 2, p. 181; *Middleton citante*, p. 201.

No rational man will doubt the forgery of this pretended epistle, which though thrown earlier in time, is a palpable repetition of the good hit that had been made in the epistle, ascribed to Pliny.

I have no doubt at all of the forgery of the passage of Tacitus. But if the objections which I have stated, or any other, be really fatal to this of Pliny, I would recommend my reverend opponents and all other assertors that the historical evidences of Christianity are unassailable, to curse and swear, and storm, and plunge, and persecute; to revile, defame, and injure their opponents as much as they

* Extat etiam in Historia Christi, Persice scripta ab Hieronymo Xaverio, Epistola Pilati ad Imp. Tiberium, quam confinxisse videtur Xaverius e loco celebri qui de Christo legitur, lib. 18. Antiquitatum Josephi, c. 4. Nullius est epistola hæc vel fidei vel autoritatis.—*Fabricii Codex Apocryphus*, tom. 1. p. 301. A. D. 1703, Hamburgi.

possibly can, to represent them as miserably ignorant, as desperately wicked, as fools, liars, madmen, and idiots; but above all, to treat both them and their writings, with the most sovereign contempt.—'Tis the best they can make of their bad bargain.

EPICETUS, A. D. 111.

A slave, in body lame, as Irus poor,
Yet to the Gods was Epictetus dear.*

He is placed by Lardner about A. D. 109, and, in his *Enchiridion*, or Manual of Moral Virtue, occurs the single allusion which may be supposed to be contained in the sentence here subjoined:

“So it is possible that a man may arrive at this temper and become indifferent to these things from madness, or from habit, as the Galileans.”†

In Dr. Lardner's collection of the Evidences of the Christian Religion, this mode of expression is of sufficient consequence to be introduced with his remark, *I should rather think that Christians are intended*, p. 49.

PLUTARCH, A. D. 140.

In his dialogue *de defectu Oraculorum*, relates a strange story about a man being divinely admonished to cry out “THE GREAT PAN IS DEAD.” Huet (and other equally learned and impartial Christian evidence hunters) suppose that hereby the death of Christ, who is the TRUE PAN, the parent of all things, and the author of all nature, was notified to heathen people.

JUVENAL, A. D. 110.

The Roman satirical poet, in his first satire, has three lines, sufficient to supply a possible allusion to the sufferings of the primitive Christians, and a frightful vignette to the congenial taste of the admirers of the pocket edition of Paley's Evidences.

“Describe Tigellinus, and you shall suffer the same punishment with those who stand burning in their own

* This distich, in Greek verse, is generally attached to the portraits of this ornament of the human race.

† Εἴτα μὲν ὑπο μαρίας μὲν δύναται τις οὕτω διατεθῆναι πρὸς τὰς ἀποειδῶς αἱ οἱ Γαλιλαῖοι.

flame, their head being held up by a stake fixed to their chin, till they make a long stream of blood and melted sulphur on the ground.”*—*Paley's rendering.*

THE EMPEROR ADRIAN, A. D. 134.

The letter of the Emperor Adrian to his brother-in-law Servianus, written in the year 134, and preserved in Flavius Vopiscus, who flourished about A. D. 300.

† “Egypt, which you commended to me, my dearest Servianus, I have found to be wholly fickle and inconstant, and continually wafted about by every breath of fame. The worshippers of Serapis are Christians, and those are devoted to the God *Serapis*, who (I find) call themselves the bishops of *Christ*. There is here no ruler of a Jewish synagogue, no Samaritan, no Presbyter of the Christians, who is not either an astrologer, a soothsayer, or a minister to obscene pleasures. The very Patriarch himself, should he come into Egypt, would be required by some to worship *Serapis*, and by others to worship *Christ*. They have, however, but one God, and it is one and the self-same whom Christians, Jews, and Gentiles alike adore, i. e. money.”

Coincident with this unsophisticated testimony, is the never-refuted charge of Zozimus, that the Emperor Constantine learned the Christian religion from an Egyptian;‡ and the fact admitted by Socrates, that the cross was found in the temple of Serapis,§ and claimed by his worshippers as the proper symbol of their religion.

THE EMPEROR MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS, THE PHILOSOPHER, A. D. 180.

In the eleventh of the twelve books of his meditations, speaks of a becoming fortitude of soul, as wholly of a superior character to that mere obstinacy, as of the

* *Pone Tigellinum, tæda lucebis in illa
Qua stantes ardent, qui fixo gutture fumant
Et latum media sulcum deducis arena.*—*Juv. Sat. 1. v. 155.*

† *Adrianus Aug. Serviano Cos. S. “Ægyptum quam mihi laudabus Serviane carissime, totam didici levem, pendulam et ad omnia famæ momenta volitantem. Illi qui Serapim colunt, Christiani sunt : et devoti sunt Serapi, qui se Christi episcopos dicunt. Nemo illic Archisynagogus Judæorum, nemo Samarites, nemo Christianorum presbyter,—non Mathematicus, non Aruspex, Aliptes. Ipse ille patriarcha quum in Ægyptum venerit ab aliis Serapidem adorare, ab aliis cogitur Christum Unus illis Deus est hunc Judæi, hunc omnes venerantur et gentes.*

‡ See the Chapter on Constantine.

§ See the passage, p. 206 in this *DIALOGUE*

Christians. The single phrase *ὡς οἱ χριστιανοί*, "*like the Christians*," is the whole amount of this testimony. Nor is it certain whether by the name of Christians, he means the worshippers of Christ, or of Serapis. Below is the whole context.*

M. VALERIUS MARTIALIS, A. D. 110.

Contemporary with Juvenal, has an epigram, the gist of which, is to ridicule the folly of giving the credit of rational fortitude to those fool-hardy wretches that rush on voluntary sufferings, and who would stand to be baked in ovens, or hold their limbs over red hot coals, for the purpose of exciting sympathy; and who, it is assumed, could be nobody else than the primitive Christians.

"In matutina nuper spectatus arena
Mucius, imposuit qui sua membra focis
Si patiens fortisque tibi durusque videtur
Abderitanæ pectora plebis habes;
Nam cum dicatur tunica præsentē molestā
Ure manum: plus est dicere non facio."
As late you saw in early morning's show,
Mucius, the fool, on red ashes glow.
If brave and patient, thence, he seems to thee,
Thou art, methinks, as great a fool as he;
For there, in robe of pitch, the fire prepared,
The wretch would burn, because the people stared.

LUCIUS APULEIUS, A. D. 164.

Of Madaura, wrote a fantastical book of metamorphoses, probably in principle somewhat similar to that of Ovid. Our beaters up for evidences of the Christian religion have enlisted this work also; and in a ridiculous story in which a man who was metamorphosed into an ass, and in that incarnation, sold to a baker,—describes his mistress, the baker's wife, as a red hot virago, an adulterous, drunken thief, cheat, scold, and liar; but with all (as such characters generally are) peculiarly *religious*.† We are to imagine that we have some sort of evidence of the existence of Christianity. Dr. Lardner concludes, "there can be no doubt that Apuleius here designs to represent a

* Οἷα εἶστιν ἡ ψυχὴ, ἡ εἰσιμὸς εἰν ἤδη ἀπολυθῆναι δεῖ τοῦ σώματος. Καὶ γὰρ σβῆσθαι, ἢ ἀκεθασθῆναι, ἢ συμμεῖναι.

† Το δε εἰσιμὸν τοῦτο ἵνα ἀπο ἰδικῆς κρίσεως ἡρχῆται; μὴ κατὰ ψιλὴν παραταξίαν ὡς οἱ χριστιανοί, ἀλλὰ λογιζομένου καὶ σεμνὸς καὶ ὥστε καὶ ἄλλον κινεῖν, ἀτραγωδῶς.

† Pistor ille qui, pessimam et ante cunctas mulieres longe deterrimam sortitus conjugem, pœnas extremas tori lariusque sustinebat; scœva scœva, vitiosa, ebriosa

Christian woman." No doubt, no doubt ! 'Tis hard to tell, whether Christianity or the ladies owe him the profounder courtesy.

With all deference to the judgment of Dr. Lardner, I venture to suggest, that this passage has not the remotest relation to that evidences for the Christian religion, which he wishes to bring forward. It bears a strong indication of the better and more honourable rank which the wife held in the domestic economy, under the ancient paganism, a fact which he and all other Christian advocates endeavour always to conceal. It indicates the prevalence of that better feeling towards the fair sex, which would have shuddered at the indelicacy of dragging virgin-moesty into the presence of a liquorish priest, to utter an enforced acknowledgment of sentiments, which, whether felt or not, were never meant by nature to be acknowledged, and to make vows and pledges of abject subjection and obedience until death, beyond all measure of obligation, in which any rational and intelligent being could be bound to one who may become false, and so deserve to be forsaken ; may become tyrannous, and therefore deserve to be hated. This undesigned discovery of the domestic economy under pagan auspices, is strongly corroborated by the fact, that among the paintings found in the ruins of Herculaneum, is a chaste and beautiful figure of the matrimonial Venus, (*Venus Pronuba*) holding a sceptre of *that* dominion enjoyed by the wife in domestic affairs. Hence as Festus under the article *clavis*, observes "the keys were consigned to the wife, as soon as she entered her husband's house. To this purpose may the custom of the Egyptians be observed, among whom, the wife ruled in the private concerns of her husband ; and accordingly in their marriage ceremonies, he promised *to obey her*."* Neither Christians nor Turks have ever been just to women.

LUCIANUS, A. D. 176.

A pagan satyrist, is by far the most explicit and diffuse of all pagan writers, who at any time within the two first

pervicax, pertinax, in rapinis turpibus avara, in sumptibus turpibus profusa, inimica fidei, hostis pudicitie. Tunc spretis atque calcatis divinis numinibus in vicem certæ religionis mentita sacrilega præsumptione Dei quem prædicaret unicum conflectis, observationibus vanis fallens omnes homines, et miserum maritum decipiens, matutino mero, et continuo stupro corpus Mancaparat. Talis illa mulier miro me persequabatur odio nam et ante lucano recubans adhuc subjungi machine novitium clamabat asinum."—*Ita citat Lardnerius, Tom. 4. p. 107.*

* Univ. Mag. 1778. p. 134.

centuries, have taken notice of the existence of the Christian sect, and of their doctrines as distinguishable in those early times, from any or all the other modes of piety.—His testimony, though so much later than that of Pliny, is entirely corroborated by it, and of the utmost consequence to the establishing of the historical fact of the real state of things in *his* time. The only reason I can conceive, why our Christian evidence writers have made so little account of this heathen testimony, is, that Christian evidence writers have in general been tinctured with Unitarianism, and therefore, rather willing that the cause of Christianity should lose one of its main pillars, than that it should receive support from one, which, at the same time, demonstrates, that the doctrine of the Trinity was really the earliest and purest form of Christianity; and consequently, whether Christianity be true or false, the Unitarian scheme is as unauthorised in history, as it is beyond all absurdities that even were in the world; the most *disgustingly* and *insolently* absurd. Lucian had seen and conversed with St. Paul, had learned from him, immediately, what his doctrine was—and even gives us a description of his person, as well as of the manners and character of the Christian sect; which after all the deduction, that we can reasonably be required to make from his testimony, as being that of an enemy, retains the corroborating countenance of every other document on the subject of which we are in possession, not excepting that of the New Testament itself. In his dialogue, entitled *Philopatris*, under the character of Triephon, he describes their form of oath, as being “*by the high reigning, great, immortal, heavenly father, the son of the father, and the spirit proceeding from the father; one in three, and three in one.*”^{*} The same dialogist continues, “I shall teach you who the true *Pan†* is; and who was before all things—for I formerly underwent the same things as you, when that Galilean, (*Paul the Apostle‡*) met me, that bald-headed, hook-nosed fellow, who went up through the air into the third heaven, and was there taught the best things;§ and who hath regenerated us by water, and hath made us to walk in the steps of the blessed, and redeemed us from the realms of the wicked; and I will make you if you

* Τριμεδοντα Θεον, μεγαν, αμβροτον, υρανιονα, υιον πατρος, πνευμα εκ πατρος εκπορευομενον, εν εκ τριων, και εξ εως τρια.

† Compare the testimony of Plutarch in this *DIEGESIS*.

‡ This Parenthesis is actually found in the Latin version of Kortholt.

§ 2 Corinth. 12. 2.

will hear me,—a man indeed.”* The description of the apostolic chief of sinners, here drawn indeed by an unfriendly hand, is singularly supported by all the bas-relievos, sculptures, and celebrated paintings of his person, in which, in addition to the short squabby figure, bald-head, beetle brows, and prodigiously large and hook nose, he is invariably represented as pot-bellied and bandy-legged. He indeed describes himself as having a particularly mean and *dirty* look, and a stammering voice;† that he could hardly stand on his feet;‡ that he was subject to fits, and severely afflicted with a disease,‡ which cannot be spoken of but in periphrases.

In his dialogue concerning the death of Perigrinus, Lucian speaks of the object of the Christians’ worship—as a crucified sophist!‡ Little stress is laid however, by Christians on this admission, though its authenticity is far less questionable than that of Tacitus. It is seen at once that this testimony does not pledge Lucian to an avowal of the fact of the crucifixion, but is his report of the report which Christians had given of themselves; as that of Tacitus is no more, even if it were genuine. Neither Lucian nor Tacitus were believers.

Lucian has however, in the same dialogue, a far more explicit testimony to the then character of Christians; he tells us, that “whenever any crafty juggler, expert in his trade, and who knew how to make a right use of things, went over to the Christians, he was sure to grow rich immediately, by making a prey of their simplicity.”§

ANCIENT WRITERS, WHOSE WORKS STILL REMAINING, WERE WRITTEN BETWEEN A. D. 35, AND A. D. 200.

I. Those who have mentioned the Christians, wrote about:—

A. D. 107 C. Plinius secund jun. in his 96th epistle.

110 C. Suetonius Tranquill, in his Life of Nero.

110 Cornel Tacitus, in his Annals 15. A. 44.

* Εγώ γάρ σε διδάξω τι το ΠΑΝ, και τις ο πρωην παντων—Και γαρ πρωην πάγω ταυτα επασχον, απερ συ, ηνικα δε μοι Γαλιλαιος εντυχεν, αναφαλαντιας επιρρινος ες τριτον ορανον αεροβατησας, και τα καλλιστα εκμεμαθηκως δι υδατος ημας ανακαινισεν ες τα των μακαρων ιχνια παρειδωδεις και εκ των ασεβων χωρων ημας ελυτρωσατο, και σε ποιησω ην με ακης, επ’ αληθειας ανθρωπον.—*Pro auctoritate Kortholtus*, p. 142.

† 2 Corinth. 12. 7.; 4 Galet. 13.; 1 Coloss. 24.; 2 Corinth. 11. 6.;—1 Corinth. 2. 3.; 2 Corinth. 5. 13.; 2 Corinth. 10. 10.

‡ Τον ανεσκολοπισμενων εκεινον σοφιστην αυτων.

§ This passage is quoted before in the chapter on Æsculapins. I have also before quoted the TESTIMONY OF LUCIAN, p. 376, as satisfactorily proving the identity of St. Paul, distinctively from this testimony to the character of Christianity.

- 138 The Emperor Adrian, in his epistle to Servianus.
 130 M. Aurel Antonin, philos., in his *Meditations*, B. 11.
 176 Lucianus, in his dialogue on the death of Peregrinus, and in his *Philopatris*.
 176 Celsus, in his "Essay on the True Word;" resting the Honour of Origen.

II. Those who are *supposed* by some writers on the Christian Evidences, to have alluded to the Christians; wrote about:—

- A. D. 98 Dio Prusæus, in a particular phrase.*
 100 M. Valer Martialis, in the epigram quoted in this *DIEGESIS*.
 100 Dec jun. Juvenalis, in three lines quoted in this *DIEGESIS*.
 109 Epictetus, in a single phrase quoted in this *DIEGESIS*.
 140 Arrianus,† in the use of the same phrase.
 164 Lucius Apuleius, as quoted in this *DIEGESIS*.
 176 Ælius Aristides, in the use of a particular phrase.‡

III. Those who would be likely to refer to the Christians but who have not done so; wrote about:—

- A. D. 40 Philo.
 40 Josephus
 79 C. Plinius Secund, the elder.§ } Philosophers.
 69 L. Ann. Seneca
 79 Diogenes Laertius
 79 Pausanias
 79 Pómpón Mela } Geographers.
 79 Q. Curtius Ruf.
 79 Luc. Flor
 123 Appianus
 140 Justinus
 141 Ælianus } Historians.

* *Οἱ πάντα διαβαλλόντες*—those who cast away every thing.—*Dio Prus.*

† *Ὡς οἱ Γαλιλαῖοι*—like the Galileans.—*Arrian.*

‡ *Τοῖς ἐν παλαιστίνη δυσσεβέσιν*—to the impious people in Palestine.

§ Both those philosophers were living, and must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest information of the existence of Jesus Christ, had such a person ever existed; their ignorance or their wilful silence on the subject, is not less than outrageously improbable. Whatever might be their dispositions with respect to the doctrines of Jesus; the miraculous darkness which is said to have accompanied his crucifixion, was a species of evidence that must have forced itself upon their senses. "Each of these philosophers in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phenomena of nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses, which his indefatigable curiosity could collect; neither of them have mentioned, or even alluded, to the miraculous darkness at the crucifixion."—*Gibbon*. Alas! the Christian is constrained to own that omnipotence itself, is *not*-omnipotent.

IV. Those who were less likely to allude to the Christians, yet must have gone somewhat out of their way, on purpose to avoid doing so; wrote about—

A. D. 63	Aneneus Lucanus	} Poets.
64	Petronius Arbiter	
64	Silius Italicus	
65	M. Ann. Lucanus	
65	Valerius Flaccus	
62	Aulas Perseus	
90	Papinus Statius	
100	Quintilianus	
130	Ptolemæus	

Observe too, that in the *Corpus Juris*, or, whole body of Roman law, there is not extant one word against the Christians.

In apology for this tremendous deficiency of evidence—Dr. Lardner pleads in mitigation of judgment, the following instance of a similar deficiency of historical evidence, in cases where the fact is nevertheless held to be unquestionable.

1. Velleius Paterculus is mentioned by no ancient writer except Priscian, though that historian certainly lived and wrote at the time of Tiberius.

2. M. Annæus Seneca, the father of the philosopher is almost unknown.

3. Lucianus has never mentioned Cicero in his encomium on Demosthenes.

4. Maximus Tyrius (who wrote in the time of Antoninus Pius,) has no reference to the Roman History.—To this we may add:—

That Herodotus and Thuoydides have never mentioned the Romans.

Here is distress indeed! To pursue the evidences of the Christian religion, after we have seen its incomparably most learned and able advocates thus striking on the shoals of reckless sophistry: after we have driven the strugglers for a grasp on historical fact, to the last trick of gathering together such *thousand miles off may-be's* of mere possible allusion,—and then showing us the lettered backs of their huge collections as "*Volumes of Evidence*;"—would be driving the drift.

If the evidences of the Christian religion, are presumed to be, its divine effects upon the dispositions and conduct

of its professors; the peculiar generosity and liberality of Christians towards the enemies and opposers of their faith; their willingness to have its foundations thoroughly sifted and examined; their readiness at all times to acquaint themselves with all the objections that can be brought against it, by whomsoever, or in what manner soever, those objections may be urged; their abhorrence of all acts of slander and defamation, for the sake of excusing themselves from the trouble of enquiry; their immaculate innocence, not only of persecution direct and overt—but of the dispositions that could possibly lead to persecution; their more rational piety, their more exalted virtue, their more diffusive benevolence. Alas! where are those evidences?

We have looked for historical evidences which might justify a rational man to himself, in believing the Christian religion to be of God. And there are none—absolutely none. We enquired for the moral effects which the prevalence of this religion through so many ages and countries of the world, has produced on men's minds, and we find more horrors, crimes, and miseries, occasioned by this religion and its bad influence on the human heart, more sanguinary wars among nations, more bitter feuds and implacable heart burnings in families; more desolation of moral principle; more of every thing that is evil and wicked, than the prevalence of any vice, or of all vices put together, could have caused: so that the evidence which should make it seem probable that God had designed this religion to prevail among men, would only go to show that he had designed to plague and curse them. But not so; Christian, hold first! and ask thine own heart if thou *hast not charged God foolishly*. Ask thine own convictions, whether, if a religion were the wickedest that ever was upon earth, and as false as it was wicked, God himself could give thee any more likely or fairer and sufficient means to emancipate thy mind from it, than the means thou hast here (if thou wilt use them) to discover the real origin, character, and evidences of Christianity. If thou believest there is any God at all, at any rate, thou should also believe that *he is a God of truth*, and so sure as he is so, so sure it is, that the pertinacious belief of any thing as true, which we might by the free exercise of our rational faculties, come to discover to be false, is the greatest sin that man can commit against him; implicit faith is the greatest of crimes; and the implicit believer is the most wicked of mankind.

APPENDIX.

MANUSCRIPTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Name.	Age.	Place where deposited.	History.	Present Condition.	Authority.
The Alexandrian	Sixth century. Cassimir Oudin says the tenth.	The British Museum, in 1753.	Cyril, Patriarch of Constanti- nople, presented it to Charles the First, in 1628, by his am- bassador, Sir Thomas Roe. It was written by the monks for the use of a monastery of the order of Acomets. i. e. <i>vigi- lant, never sleeping.</i>	Its original text is no longer visible; written with uncial letters; no inter- vals before the words; it has been as altered from the Latin version; was written by a person who was not master of the Greek language.	Cassimer Oudin, Wetstein, &c. &c. as quoted by Bp. Marsh in his Mi- chaelis's Introd- uct. vol. 2, p. 185, and following.
The Vatican, no- ted 1209.	Sixth Century.	In the Royal Library at Paris.	Written, probably, by the monks of Mount Athos; first heard of as being in the pos- session of Pope Urban VIII.	"Some of the leaves are wanting; the ink in some places faded; the letters have been retouched by a skilful and faithful hand." O yes, we must not doubt their skill and faithfulness!	Unitarian editors of the improved ver- sion of the New Testament, and Marsh, <i>in locis.</i>
The Cambridge, or Codex Bezae.	"Perhaps of all the manuscripts now extant this is the most an- cient." — Bp. Marsh.	In the University Li- brary at Cambridge.	Theodore Beza used it for his edition of the N. T. It was found at Lyons, in the monas- tery of St. Irenaeus, A.D. 1562. Beza himself owns of it that it should rather be kept, for the avoiding of offence of certain persons, than to be published.	Uncial letters; no intervals between the words; is ungrammatical, as <i>το πνευμα κατα παρορτα</i> . (Matt. iii. 12.) It varies from the common Greek text in a greater degree than any other.	Unitarian editors, and Bishop Marsh, vol. 1. p. 229.

The Clement, or Regius, 2245.	Seventh Century. In the Royal Library at Paris.	It was first found in the monastery of Cluny, called Clermont, from Clermont in Beauvais, where it was preserved; 36 leaves of it were stolen by one John Aymôn, and sold in England, but since recovered.	Is Greek and Latin; contains the Epistles, but that to the Hebrews by a later hand; like other Græco-Latin codices the Greek has been accommodated to the Latin.	Wetstein, Unitarian editors. Professor Schweyhäusen, quoted by Bishop Marsh, vol. 2, p. 245, <i>et circiter</i> .
The Ephrem.	Of the seventh century.	In the Royal Library at Paris.	First discovered by Dr. Allix, in the beginning of the 18th century.	Unitarian editors of the improved New Testament.
All the manuscripts, from which our present text was taken.	God knows.	Up to the year 1749, at Alcala, i. e. Complutum, in Spain.	The librarian sold them to one Toryo, who dealt in fire works, as materials for making sky-rockets. The statements of the Unitarian editors that these MSS. were of little value, is an Unitarian statement—it is not true.	Marsh's Michaelis, vol. 2, part i. p. 441.

Besides these, there are above twenty other manuscripts in large letters, of different portions of the New Testament, and some hundreds in small characters. It appears from the subscriptions of very many manuscripts of which we are in possession, that they were written on Mount Athos, where the monks employed themselves in writing copies of the Greek Testament. Some manuscripts, ascribed to the highest antiquity, have been discovered to be the composition of impositors, as late as the 17th century, for the purpose of foisting in favourite doctrines, and imposing on Christian credulity. The Montford and Berlin MSS. for instance.—*Marsh*, v. 2, p. 295.

ANCIENT VERSIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

1. ~~new~~—The PESHITO, the most ancient Syriac version, brought into Europe, A. D. 1552. Printed at Vienna, at the expence of the Emperor Maximilian.

2. The PHILOXENIAN, a later Syriac version, made in the sixth century, under the inspection of Philozenus, Bishop of Hierapolis. Published at Oxford, by Professor White, A. D. 1778.

3. The COPTIC, in the ancient dialect of the Lower Egypt. Still read, though it is not understood.

4. The SAHIDIC, in the ancient dialect of the Upper Egypt.

5. The ETHIOPIC, used in Abyssinia. First published at Rome, A. D. 1548, by three Ethiopian editors.

6. The ARMENIAN, made in the fifth century. No genuine copies in existence.

7. The PERSIC, there are two of this class: neither very ancient; the one a translation from the Syriac, the other from the Greek.

8. The LATIN, sometimes in distinction, called the *Italic*. These very translations of the Greek text as it stood in the most ancient manuscripts, were in general use in an age that precedes the date of any manuscript now extant.

9. The VULGATE is that Latin first corrected and published by the monk St. Jerome, A. D. 384, by order of Pope Damasus, and by the Council of Trent pronounced authentic; so that no one may dare or presume, under any pretext, to reject it.

All the French, Italian, and Spanish bibles that were published before the sixteenth century, were taken wholly from the Latin.—*Marsh's Michaelis*, vol. 2. p. 7.

I conclude this general synopsis of the ancient versions of the New Testament, by a striking and spirited censure, (as applicable to the great author from whom I quote so largely, as to the most bigotted of his fraternity,) which I find in a very able work, entitled *Palæoromaica*, published by Murray, 1822, professing to inquire whether the Hellenistic style (*that of the Greek Testament*) is not Latin Greek. “The opinion that the Epistle to the Romans was originally composed in Latin, is not only supported by the Syrian scholiast, but has been conjectured by several

theologians, chiefly of the Roman church ;* which, to the shame of Protestantism, has allowed far greater freedom of discussion to its members than has ever been enjoyed in those churches which profess to make free inquiry the boon which they offer, and the very badge of their distinction. In fact, it is difficult to say, what has been secretly discovered or not discovered in biblical criticism and theology, as authors, on these topics, have hitherto written in fetters : and many of them, probably, have suppressed much of their real sentiments, from an anxiety for their repose."—*Palæoromaica*, p. 186. Could this learned writer have more significantly given us to understand, that divines have never yet had courage enough to be honest men ?

EDITIONS OF THE GREEK TESTAMENT.

1. The COMPLUTENSIAN POLYGLOT, so called from Complutum, the ancient name for Alcalá, a Spanish University, and polyglot, of many tongues. Published at the expence and under the management of the celebrated cardinal, statesman, and warrior, Francis Ximenes de Cisneros, the 22nd of March, 1520, by permission of Pope Leo X. Only 600 impressions were taken off.

2. A. D. 1516.—ERASMUS, at Basle in Switzerland, published an edition, from a few manuscripts found in that neighbourhood—a second, a third, and, lastly, in A. D. 1527, a fourth, in which, to obviate the clamour of bigots, he introduced many alterations, to make it agree with the edition of Cardinal Ximenes.

3. A. D. 1550.—ROBERT STEPHENS,† a learned printer, at Paris, published a splendid edition, in which he availed himself of the Complutensian Polyglot. It abounds with errors, though long supposed to be a correct and immaculate work.

4. A. D. 1589.—THEODORE BEZA, successor to John Calvin, at Geneva, published a critical edition, in which he made use of Robert Stephen's own copy, with many

* Were *common sense* consulted in matters of biblical criticism, what would it say to the supposition that an Epistle to the Romans should be written in a language of which the Romans were utterly ignorant ? or to the fact, of the many words in the Greek Testament which are nothing more than Latin words written in Greek characters, and such as no Greek writer of those times would either have used or known the use of ?

† He first introduced the present division of the text of the New Testament into verses.—*Michaelis*, vol. 2, pt. I, p. 527.

additional various readings,* from fifteen manuscripts, which had been entrusted to the collation of *Henry Stephens*, the son of Robert, a youth of eighteen years of age.

5. A. D. 1624.—The ELZEVIR EDITION, published at Leyden, at the office of the Elzevirs, who were the most eminent printers of their time. The editor is unknown. This edition differs very little from the text of Robert Stephens; a few variations are admitted from the edition of Beza, and a very few more upon some unknown authority; but it does not appear that the editor was in possession of any manuscripts. The reputation of the Elzevirs for correctness of typography, and the beauty of this specimen, raised it to the pinnacle—it was unaccountably taken for granted, that it exhibited a pure and perfect text. This, therefore, became the standard of all succeeding editions, and constitutes at this day *the received text*.

EUROPEAN TRANSLATIONS.

A. D. 900.—Valdo, Bishop of Frising, caused the gospels to be translated into Dutch rhyme.

1160.—Valdus, Bishop of —, caused them to be turned into French rhyme. We may guess how closely the original would be adhered to in these poems.

1360.—Charles the Wise is said to have caused them to be turned into French prose.

1377.—John Trevisa translated them into English.

The art of printing was discovered A. D. 1444; the first printed book in England was published by Caxton, A. D. 1474, the 13th of the reign of our Edward IV. Before this time our Christian countrymen, generally, must have been entirely ignorant of the text of Scripture.

1517.—William Tyndal made the best English translation of the New Testament, and was put to death for having done so.

1611.—The seventh of our King James I., that is, 217 years since, is the date of our present English translation; in the preface to which, the translators admit, that they themselves did not know whether there were any translation, or correction of a translation, in existence, in King Henry the Eighth or King Edward's time. The ground of

* The number of the various readings is admitted to be *at least* one hundred and thirty thousand; the total number of words is one hundred and eighty one thousand two hundred and fifty-three.

objection adduced by the puritans against the Church of England Liturgy, to King James I., at Hampden Court, was, that it maintained the Bible as *there* translated, which they said was a most corrupt translation. In the justice of this complaint, originated our present translation under patronage of that "most high and mighty prince, James," which the Roman Catholics, with equal justice complain, that it egregiously *Protestantizes*, and purposely gives a rendering to innumerable phrases, devised to hide and disguise their original and essentially monkish and papistical significancy.—*Ward's Errata of the Protestant Translation, and Johnson's Historical Account of the several English Translations of the Bible.*

SPURIOUS PASSAGES.

Passages of the New Testament, retained and circulated as the Word of God, or as of equal authority with the rest, though known and admitted on all hands to be forgeries.

Acts xx. 28.—1 Timothy iii. 16.—1 John v. 7.—These are admitted to be of the utmost importance, bearing on the most essential doctrines, yet are wilful and wicked interpolations.

Matt. vi. 15.—The whole of the doxology at the end of the Lord's prayer.

John v.—The whole story of the Pool of Bethesda.

Luke xvi. 19.—The whole story of the Rich Man in Hell-fire.

John viii.—The whole story of the Woman taken in Adultery.

Luke xxiii. 39.—The whole story of the Penitent Thief.

Acts ix. 5, 6.—The whole paragraph of Christ's Speech out of the Clouds.

The whole of the subscriptions at the end of the Epistles, wherever found.

The whole of the titles and superscriptions wherever found.

Passages of the New Testament rejected by the German Divines, and most eminent Christian critics, scholars, and theologians of Europe : or held as at least, INFINITELY SUSPICIOUS.

The whole of the Gospel of St. John, from beginning to end.—*Bretschneider.*

The whole of the Epistle to the Hebrews : of the Epistle of St. James : of the 2nd Epistle of Peter : of the 2nd Epistle of John : of the 3d Epistle of John : of the Epistle

of Jude : of the Revelation—"Not fit to be alleged as affording sufficient proof of any doctrine."—*Dr. Lardner.*

The whole of the last nine verses of Matt. i.

The whole of the second chapter following.

The whole of the one hundred and twenty-six verses immediately following Luke's preface.

The whole of the Story of the Angel and the bloody Sweat, (Luke xx. 43.)—*Unitarian Editors.*

The whole story of the Conception, of the Slaughter of the Innocents, of the Devil and the herd of Swine.—*Dr. Evanson.*

The whole of the genealogy of Christ, as appearing in St. Luke.

The whole of the story of his baptism, of his transfiguration, of his calming the storm.

The whole of the gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. John.—*Evanson.*

The whole of the Acts of the Apostles was unknown or rejected by many sincere professors of the Christian faith in the fourth century.—*Chrysostom.*

The whole of the Epistle to the Romans, the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Epistle to the Colossians, the 1st Epistle of Peter, the 1st Epistle of John.—*Evanson.*

Bishop Marsh makes a droll apology for the blunders of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which he maintains to be perfectly compatible with divine inspiration : "John, who was inspired as well as they, had the advantage of having a better memory." They had all of them need of good memories, or there is no truth in the proverb.

It is the unquestionably *Christian*, and insurpassably *learned* Evanson, who exclaims, "Gracious God ! have mercy upon the presumptuous folly and madness of thy erring creatures !" —*Dissonance*, p. 82.

FALSE REPRESENTATIONS.

1. It is a false representation, or what would be called in common parlance—a lie, upon the title-page, where it is represented, that the New Testament is "translated out of the original Greek," seeing there never was any original Greek. The original of Matthew's gospel is believed to have been Hebrew. The Epistle to the Romans, and indeed, the whole of the New Testament, existed in a barbarous monkish Latin, from which the oldest Greek manuscripts in existence are but barbarous translations.

2. The circulating the whole as the word of God, and as of equal authority, notwithstanding its containing several forged and interpolated passages, admitted so to be, by the circulators themselves.*

3. The representing Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as the *authors* of the gospels which go under their names ; in the teeth of evidence, that those gospels are blundering compilations from some previously existing document or documents.

4. The representing these compilers of previously existing documents, as contemporaries or witnesses of the transactions which their compilations detail.

5. The multiplying the number of pretended witnesses to the facts of the gospel, by representing those as witnesses, who are only said by other persons, to have been witnesses.

6. The fear of making inquiry whether these things are so, from the fear of discovering that they are *even so*.

7. The taking any means, fair or foul, direct or indirect, to prevent the knowledge of them coming to be generally and extensively spread.

8. The giving currency or credence, to all manner of scandal, slander, and evil speaking ; and heaping all possible calumnies on the motives and characters of those who labour to undeceive mankind.

9. The prosecuting, persecuting, and seeking to destroy or drive out of life, those who exert themselves to provoke inquiry, and to diffuse knowledge—who sacrifice their own interests to the public good, and prefer the luxury of making the world in which they live the better, to all the luxuries the world can give.

10. The taking no notice, or affecting to take none, of the objections to the evidences of the Christian religion, which have arisen upon admissions and surrenders which have been made by the ablest divines of the present century, and on the improved science of criticism, on both sides ; and then pretending that there is no novelty in the objections of modern infidelity ; or that the objections of the present century had been sufficiently refuted by the Watsons, Paleys, Lardners, or Leslies, of fifty or a hun-

* Yet these propagandists, propagating in God's name what they know to be a —, would, to be sure, pass themselves off for honest men—aye, as honest as the clippers and coiners who pay their way with a great deal of really good money, only slipping in, here and there, a known dump. If, in our own time, all our bishops, and clergy, and all religionists, of all sorts, still concur in circulating or countenancing that as truth, which they know to be false, what chance, think we, had truth in the struggle, in olden time?

dred years ago—as if, after admissions had been made, which had never before been admitted; no room had been given for objections to be made, which had never before been objected; and, while the press has teemed with a thousand better modes of defending Christianity, unbelievers had been asleep all the while, and dreamed of no adroiter methods of attacking it: or, as if the Alleys, Beards, Belshams, Chalmers, Channings, Collyers, Elsleys, Hartwell Hornes, Pye Smiths, Wilsons, Marshs', &c., and the whole Christian phalanx of the present generation, had had no scope for their prowess but on the dead bones of Tindal, Chubb, Voltaire, or Paine; and were the successors only to an inglorious war, of which the conquest and the laurels had been won before they were born.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES.

AN EXPLICATION OF SOME TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS WHICH OCCUR
IN ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

A.U., *Anno Urbis*, is the year of the foundation of the city of Rome,* according to Varro's account.

A.U.C., *Anno Urbis Condita*, or *Anno ab Urbe Condita*, is the same sense more fully expressed, i. e. in the year from the building of the city.

A.D., *Anno Domini*, or the year of the Lord. Since the conversion of Constantine, A.D. 311, it denotes the vulgar Christian æra, according to which Christ is supposed to have been born Dec. 25, in the 45th of the Julian period, and 754th from the building of Rome. This calculation, though serving the purposes of general reading, is known to be defective. Lardner says, "Our Saviour was born in the reign of Herod the Great." But it is certain that Herod died before the Passover, A.U. 752, very probably in A.U. 750 or 751.

We learn from Josephus,† that the Procuratorship of Pontius Pilate corresponded with the last ten years of the Empeor Tiberius: that is, from A.D. 27 to A.D. 35. As to the particular time of the death of Christ, a very early tradition fixed it to the 25th of March, A.D. 29, under the consulship of the two Gemini.‡ This date is adopted by Pagi, Cardinal Norris, and Le Clerc. The vulgar æra places it, without any known reason, four years later.

The JULIAN PERIOD is an epoch, so called from Julius Cæsar.

* Romulus commenced the building of Rome about 751 years before the Christian æra.

† Antiquitat. 18, 3.

‡ Tertullian, adv. Judæos, c. 8.

The first year of this epoch, when Cæsar's reformation of the Roman year took place, commences the first of January, A. U. 709.

A. M., *Anno Mundi*, i. e. the year of the world, ridiculously fixed at 4004 before the birth of Christ. Julius Africanus, a Christian chronologist, who wrote A. D. 220, insists that the world was made on the first of September, and was exactly 5508 years, three months, and twenty-five days old at the birth of Christ. The learned Dr. Lightfoot thinks he can, with great probability, settle the precise time when the Christian covenant began. He says, that "Adam was created on Friday morning, at nine o'clock; that he ate the forbidden fruit about *one*, (that being the time of eating); and that Christ was *promised about three o'clock in the afternoon*." So nicely accurate is our religious chronology.

But never be it forgotten, that the application of chronology to matters of faith, is entirely of modern invention. The Apostles themselves, and the most primitive fathers, who understood every thing allegorically, never dreamed of giving us any more particular indications of date to the sacred story than the common preface to a fable, "*And it came to pass in those days*." There are no references to contemporary circumstances in the New Testament, but such as are outrageously at variance with historical fact. Those whom we should be taught to speak of as living in the first time of Christianity, speak of themselves as existing in the last time, and as knowing it was the last time.* Those who are believed to have flourished when Christianity was in its most primitive purity, complain of the prevalence of its universal corruption. Justin Martyr, the first of the Christian apologists, is out in his chronology to the difference of 300 years, and makes Ptolemy, king of Egypt, and Herod, king of Jerusalem, contemporaries.†



THE REIGNS AND ORDER OF SUCCESSION OF THE ROMAN EMPERORS, DURING THE FOUR FIRST CENTURIES OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA.

<i>First Century.</i>		A. D.
AUGUSTUS, having reigned 44 years from the defeat of Mark Antony, and 57 from the death of Julius Cæsar, died,	- - - - -	August 19, 14
TIBERIUS, began his reign,	- - - - -	August 19, 14
CALIGULA, began his reign,	- - - - -	March 16, 37
CLAUDIUS,	- - - - -	January 24, 41
NERO,	- - - - -	October 13, 54
GALBA, reigned from	- - - - -	June 9, 68, to January 15, 69
OTHO,	- - - - -	January 15, 69, to April 16, —

* John ii. 18.

† Οτι δε πολιμαίος ο αιγυπτιακός βασιλεύς προσεπεμψε τῷ τῶν ιουδαίων τότε βασιλευσιντι Ηρώδη.—*Apol.* i, p. 49.

A. D.

VITELLIUS, reigned from	-	June 2, 69, to December 21,	—
VESPASIAN, began his reign,	-	-	July 1, 69
TITUS,	-	-	June 24, 79
DOMITIAN,	-	-	September 13, 81
NERVA	-	-	September 18, 96
TRAJAN,	-	-	January 27, 98

Second Century.

Adrian began his reign,	-	-	August 10, 117
Antoninus Pius,	-	-	July 10, 138
M. Antoninus Verus Aurelius, the Philosopher,	-	-	March 7, 161
Commodus,	-	-	March 17, 180
Helvius Pertinax,	-	-	December 31, 192
Didius Julianus,	-	-	March 28, 193
Septimius Severus,	-	-	April 13, 193

Third Century.

Septimius Severus reigned to,	-	-	211
Antoninus Caracalla,	-	-	220
Macrinus,	-	-	221
Antoninus Heliogabalus,	-	-	224
Alexander,	-	-	237
Maximinus,	-	-	240
Gordianus,	-	-	246
Philip,	-	-	254
Decius,	-	-	255
Gallus, Æmilianus, three months,	-	-	256
Valerianus, and his son }	-	-	271
Galienus,	-	-	273
Claudius,	-	-	273
Quintilius, only seventeen days in,	-	-	276
Aurelianus,	-	-	279
Tacitus, only six months,	-	-	285
Florinus reigned 80 days,	-	-	287
Probus,	-	-	307
Carus,	-	-	
Diocletian,	-	-	

Fourth Century.

Diocletian reigned with }	-	-	307
Maximianus,	-	-	
Constantius with }	-	-	318
Maximinus, Constantius surviving,	-	-	336
Constantinus Magnus,	-	-	365
Constantius, jun., Constantius, and Constans,	-	-	367
Julian, began Dec. 11, 365, died,	-	-	
Jovian, only seven months,	-	-	378
Valentinianus,	-	-	399
Valentinianus, jun., Gratianus, and Theodosius Magnus,	-	-	

THE NAMES AND ORDER OF SUCCESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FATHERS.

All who lived and wrote at any time within the first century, so as to fall within a supposition of the possibility of their having seen or conversed with any one or more of the Apostles themselves, are on that account called

The Apostolic Fathers.

These are five only :

	A.D.
St. Barnabas	- - - - -
St. Clement, Bishop of Rome, called therefore Clemens Romanus	- - - - - 96
St. Hermas, brother to Pius, Bishop of Rome,	- - - - - 100
St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch,	- - - - -
St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna,	- - - - -

Fathers of the Second Century.

Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis,	- - - - - 101
Quadratus, a prophet and apologist,	- - - - - 119
Aristides, an Athenian philosopher and apologist,	- - - - - 121
Ægesippus, an ecclesiastical historian,	- - - - - 130
Justin Martyr,	- - - - - 140
Melito, Bishop of Sardis,	- - - - - 141
Apollinaris, apologist,	- - - - - 163
Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth,	- - - - - 167
Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch,	- - - - - 181
Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons,	- - - - - 182
Pantænus, Master of the Alexandrine school,	- - - - - 193
Clemens Alexandrinus.	- - - - - 194

Fathers of the Third Century.

Tertullian, a priest of Carthage,	- - - - - 202
Minutius Felix,	- - - - - 210
Origen,	- - - - - 230
St. Gregory, the wonder worker,	- - - - - 243
Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage,	- - - - - 248
Novatian, aspirant to the see of Rome,	- - - - - 251
Lucian, Presbyter of Antioch.	- - - - - 290

Fathers of the Fourth Century.

Peter, tenth Bishop of Alexandria,	- - - - - 300
Arnobius	- - - - - 306
Lactantius	- - - - - 316
Arius, and his follower,	- - - - - 316
Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea,	- - - - - 316
Constantine, Emperor,	- - - - - 316
Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria,	- - - - - 326
Damasus, Pope of Rome,	- - - - - 370
Basil the Great, Bishop of Cæsarea, in Cappadocia,	- - - - - 370
Gregory Nazianzen,	- - - - - 370
Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa in Cappadocia,	- - - - - 371
Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan,	- - - - - 374
Jerome, Presbyter and Monk,	- - - - - 392
Augustin, Bishop of Hippo Regius, in Africa,	- - - - - 395

Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople,	-	-	-	398
Innocent I., Pope of Rome,	-	-	-	400

THE NAMES AND ORDER OF SUCCESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN
HERETICS

The Apostolic Heretics.

Hymenæus.

Alexander.

Philetus.

Hermogenes.

Demas.

Diotrephes.

Dositheus, a Samaritan, who set himself up as the Messiah.

Simon Magus, styling himself *the great power of God*.

Menander, a pupil of Simon Magus.

Nicolas, founder of the sect of Nicolaitans. mentioned 2 Rev. 6. 14. 15.

Cerinthus, against whom St. John wrote his gospel.

Basilides, who taught that it was Simon the Cyrenian, and not Jesus, who was crucified; while Christ stood by and laughed at the mistake of the Jews; his notion was adopted by Mahomet, and is seriously maintained in the Koran.

Carpocrates, worshipped images of Jesus, Paul, Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle, &c., as having equal claims on human superstition.

HERETICS OF THE SECOND CENTURY.

Nazarenes, a continuation of the Therapeuts,

Ebionites, a poor sect of Unitarians, who fell into the wild conceit that Jesus Christ was a mere mortal man, and had a corporeal existence.

A.D. 114. Elkai, founder of the sect of the Elcesaites, who maintained, that Jesus Christ was a certain power, whose height was 24 schœnia, i. e. 66 miles, his breadth 24 miles, and his thickness proportionably wonderful.

They who receive the book called the Acts, or Journies of the Apostles, Peter, John, Andrew, Thomas, and Paul,—says the learned and pious Jeremiah Jones, must believe that Christ was not really, but only appeared as a man; and was seen by his disciples in various forms, sometimes as a young man, sometimes as an old one, sometimes as a child, sometimes great, sometimes small, sometimes so tall, that his head would reach the clouds, that he was not crucified himself, but another in his stead, while he stood by and laughed at the mistake of those who imagined that they crucified him. *Jones on the Canon*, vol. 1, p. 12.

Saturninus of Antioch.

Cerdo of Syria.

- Marcion of Pontus.
- Valentine of Egypt.
- Bardesanes of Edessa.
- Tatian of Assyria.
- Theodotus.
- Artemon.
- Hermogenes.
- Montanus.

It would be idle to attempt to assign to each heresiarch the particular tenets upon which his sect was founded. To the variety of combinations which madness may form, madness only would seek for definitions, or care for them.

Were there ever any two congregations of Christians in all the world, who exactly agree in telling the Christian story in every respect in the same way? They who were nearest to the fountain head, were farthest from consistency. Upwards of ninety different heresies are admitted to have existed within the three first centuries.

JEWISH AUTHORS.

A.D. 40. Philo Judæus, a native of Alexandria, of a priest's family, and brother to the alabarch, or chief Jewish magistrate in that city. *See the large use of his testimony by Eusebius, given in this DIEGESIS.*

A.D. 67. T. Flavius Josephus, the well known historian, or rather mythographist of the Jewish wars.

The version or first translation of the Jewish scriptures into Greek, made by 70 or 72 translators called in proof, the Septuagint is properly the Alexandrian version, as having been made at Alexandria in Egypt, about 250 years B. C. Not only the Old Testament, but the New, was entirely concocted and got up by these Egyptian monks, who from their far famed university of Alexandria, dealt out at their pleasure, the *credenda* that have since regulated the faith, and subjugated the reason of mankind. In a word, we owe every iota of the Christian religion to the Egyptian monks, and the facilities afforded for overbearing the resistance of reason and common sense, by the collecting and bringing together of all the powers of imposture into the first of these mischievous and wicked cabals, those chartered phalanxes of confederated knaves, which have since been called *universities*.

A.D. 128. Aquila of Pontus, a Gentile convert to the Christian faith, lapsed into Judaism, and translated the Old Testament.

A.D. 175. Theodotion, also a Gentile convert, lapsed into Judaism, and made a very literal version of the Hebrew scriptures.

A.D. 201. Symmachus, a Samaritan, first adhered to the Jews, then turned Christian, and afterwards turned Jew again; made

a new, but rather paraphrastical, translation of the Old Testament.

THE NAME AND ORDER OF SUCCESSION OF WRITERS WHO HAVE
DIRECTLY OPPOSED THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

The principal are :—1, Celsus ; 2, Hierocles ; 3, Porphyry ; and 4, Julian.

Of these, the writings only of the Emperor Julian, who comes far too late in time to be of consideration—have come down to us.

We have nothing from the pen of Celsus, but what Origen, who attempted to refute him a hundred years after, has chosen to affiliate upon him.

We gather that Hierocles opposed the character of the philosopher Apollonius of Tyana, as a *real character* and a better example of moral perfection, than the imagined hero of the gospel.

Porphyry acquired the surname of the *virtuous*; and brought such formidable objections to the Christian story, that all his real writings were by the order of the Christian Emperor Theodosius, committed to the flames ; and such writings only as Christians themselves had forged, permitted to come down to posterity under his name.

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORIANS.

A.D. 315. Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea.

A.D. 423. Theodoret of Antioch, Bishop of Cyrus.

A.D. 439. Socrates of Constantinople, a lawyer or pleader, hence sometimes called Scholasticus. He wrote an ecclesiastical history from the accession of Constantine, A. D. 309, to A. D. 439, with uncommon judgment and diligence.

A.D. 440. Sozomen (Hermias) of Bethelia, near Gaza, in Palestine, composed a history of the same period, as the two preceding writers ; his style is superior to that of Socrates ; but his judgment must be inferior.

A.D. 425. Philostorgius of Cappadocia, wrote a history of about a hundred years from A. D. 325.

A.D. 595. Evagrius Scholasticus, Præfect of Antioch. His Ecclesiastical History extends from A. D. 431, to A. D. 594. "It is much loaded" says Elsley "with credulous accounts of miracles."

A.D. 401. Sulpitius Severus, a Latin Historian, of Aquitane, in France, and a priest, has left us a little history of the world,—brought down to A. D. 400.

A.D. 1333. Nicephorus Callistus, a monk of Constantinople. His history is weak and full of idle fables.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCILS

A.D. 1. The first held at Jerusalem, was a meeting of king

Herod and all the chief priests and scribes of the people, with the wise men of the east, to inquire where Christ should be born.

A.D. 12. "A council of priests, whereat Jesus Christ was admitted into the holy order of priesthood,—a jury of midwives having been impaneled, and upon due scrutiny had, on the body of his mother, having given in their unanimous verdict, that her virginity remained *intact*."—So far the learned Suidas, as he learned of a Jew.

A.D. 32. Council of chief priests to make their bargain with Judas Iscariot for the arrest of Jesus Christ.

A.D. 32. A Council of chief priests to defeat the testimony of the soldiers who kept the sepulchre.

A.D. 32. Council of the Apostles to elect Matthias into the apostleship in the room of the traitor Judas.

GENERAL COUNCILS.

A.D. 47. Council of the Apostles concerning circumcision.—*Acts of the Apostles*.

A.D. 66. Council of the Apostles to elect Simeon Cleophas 2nd Bishop of Jerusalem, to succeed James.

A.D. 70. Council in which the apostolic canons are pretended to have been agreed on.

A.D. 99. Council of Ephesus for the *reformation* of the churches and consecration of Bishops, at which John the Evangelist was present ; and being a priest, as we learn from Polycrates, who had the advantage of him in being a bishop, wore a *scapulary or surplice.

A.D. 163. The Council of Ancyra in Galatia, to suppress the errors of Montanus.

A.D. 179. Councils in France and Asia, against the heresy of Montanus.

A.D. 193. Council at Rome touching the celebration of Easter. Victor Bishop of Rome, excommunicated all the eastern churches, for their difference on this subject.

A.D. 246. Fabianus, Pope of Rome, miraculously elected by the Holy Ghost perching upon his head in the shape of a dove ; in synod denounced the schism of Novatus.

A.D. 254. Council of Carthage under its President, Cyprian, fell into the heresy of re-baptizing heretics.

A.D. 271. A first and second council of Antioch, for the condemnation of, and degradation of its Bishop, Paul of Samosata.

A.D. 295. Grand Council of 300 bishops and 30 priests, at Sinuessa, where Marcellinus, Bishop of Rome, was condemned for denying Christ, and sacrificing to idols.

* Καὶ ἰωάννης ὁ ἐπὶ τῷ στήθος τοῦ κυρίου ἀναπείσων, ὃς ἐγέννηθ' ἱερεὺς τὸ πέταλον πεφορηκώς—And John, who leaned on the Lord's bosom, who having become a priest wore a petalon.—*Euseb.* lib. 3. c. 25.—Popish trumpery so soon in fashion !

A.D. 307. Council of Ancyra, where such as sacrificed to idols, were allowed to be received under certain conditions, and deacons who could not contain, were suffered to marry.

A.D. 327. Grand Council of Nice in Bythia, under the presidency of Constantine the Great, gave us the *God of God* creed used in the communion service. Pappus, in his *Synodicon* to the council of Nice, asserts, that having promiscuously put all the books under the communion table in a church, they besought the Lord, that the *inspired* records might get upon the table, while the *spurious* ones remained underneath, which accordingly happened.*

A.D. 368. Council of Laodicea. This council first, and not that of Nice, is supposed to have given a catalogue of the books contained in the New Testament : not including the Revelation.

A.D. 397. The third council of Carthage ; present, Aurelius, Bishop of Carthage ; Augustin, Bishop of Hippo, and 42 other bishops. Of this council, the 47th Canon ordains, "that nothing beside the canonical scriptures be read in the church under the name of divine scriptures." All those contained and arranged as in our present Old and New Testaments, are in this canon enumerated as being canonical.

A.D. 401. The council of Chalcedon. Here first the New Testament was set in the midst of the assembly, as the great appeal. Yet St. Chrysostom, who died A.D. 407, assures us, that in his time, the Acts of the Apostles was a book by many Christians, entirely unknown.

"The canon of the New Testament," says Dr. Lardner, "had not been settled by any authority that was decisive and universally acknowledged, but Christian people were at liberty to judge for themselves, concerning the genuineness of writings proposed to them as apostolical ; and to determine according to evidence." Even so late as in the time of the historian Cassiodorus,† whom Dr. Lardner places at A.D. 556.

There are reckoned in all 17 general councils, but the rest of them are too late in time, or too irrelevant to any bearing on the historical evidences of Christianity, to come within the scope of this *DIEGESIS*—the council of Trent, A.D. 1549, is the last of them.

Augustus the monk first preached Christianity in England A.D. 597.

The inhabitants of England being *Picts*, or painted savages, first embraced Christianity, A.D. 698. *Chronol. Table of Evans's Sketches.*

* Εν γὰρ οἰκῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ παρὰ τὴν δαίαν τραπέζην αὐτὰς παραθεμένη, προσεβόητο ὡς εὐρεθῆναι τὰς θεοπνευστοὺς ἀπάνω, τὸν Κύριον ἐξαίτησαντες, καὶ τὰς κειβηλοὺς, οὐ καὶ γέγονεν, υποκατωθεῖν.

† Senator and Complier of the Tripartite History, i. e. the Ecclesiastical Histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret united.—See this argument handled in my *Syntagma* p. 68. Published from this prison in refutation of the infinite vituperations of the Christian Instruction Society.

EXTENT OF CHRISTIANITY.

If we divide the known countries of the earth, into thirty equal parts, five of them are Christian, six Mahometan, and nineteen Pagan.—*Bayle's Dictionary*.

Dr. Evans supposing the inhabitants of the world to be eight hundred millions ; gives us the annexed scale of probable proportions.

Jews	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,500,000
Pagans	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	482,000,000
Christians	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	175,000,000
Mahommedans	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	140,000,000

Subdivision of Christians.

Greek and Eastern Churches	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30,000,000
Roman Catholics	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	80,000,000
Protestants	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	65,000,000

Total number of Christians - - - 175,000,000

In this, which is wholly Christian arithmetic, no account is made of the probable proportion of either professed or real UNBELIEVERS, whose number, be it greater or less, is on all hands admitted to be an increasing number, and a number to be deducted, not from the amount of Jews, Pagans, or Mohammedans ; but exclusively from the amount of Christians ; and in the amount of Christians, chiefly from the most intelligent, reflecting, and literary characters, that is unquestionably from the very nerves and core of their strength.

Let their own statement be credible—e. g. Dr. Priestley observes in one of his last sermons, that when he visited France in 1774, all her philosophers and men of letters were absolutely infidels.*

Dr. Evans who died Jan. 24, 1827, had announced his plan of a work, which he lived not to finish, whose professed object, in his own terms, was to shield the minds of the rising generation, from the *growing evil* of the age, an overweening and clamorous infidelity.†

The whole united Scottish Presbytery, in a dolorous Jeremiad, publicly announce, that all the most intelligent and accomplished men among them, have imbibed the principles of infidelity. Their own words are, "*O God, pity us, for our case is very pitiful, and there is nobody else to pity us, but only thou, O God !* And not now is it according to the word of the Lord in the parable, that one sheep should be astray, and ninety and nine safely gathered into the fold, but that the ninety and nine should be straying and only one abiding in the fold."‡ Yet

* Quoted thus in Evans's Sketches, 15th ed. p. 5.

† Evans's Sketches, 15th ed. pref. xv.

‡ Pastoral Letter from the Scottish Presbytery 1827, p. 39.

these zealous advocates of the Christian cause affect to treat their adversaries, who are thus gaining the march upon them, it seems, at the rate of a hundred to one, as objects of unmingled contempt. It is not in the power of language to exceed the tone of bitter reviling and caustic scorn with which the followers of the imagined meek and holy Jesus speak of all who call their pretensions in question. The *odium theologicum*, or theological hatred, has become a proverb, indicating that no hatred is so intense and implacable, as that of the professors of a religion of long-suffering and forgiveness.

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